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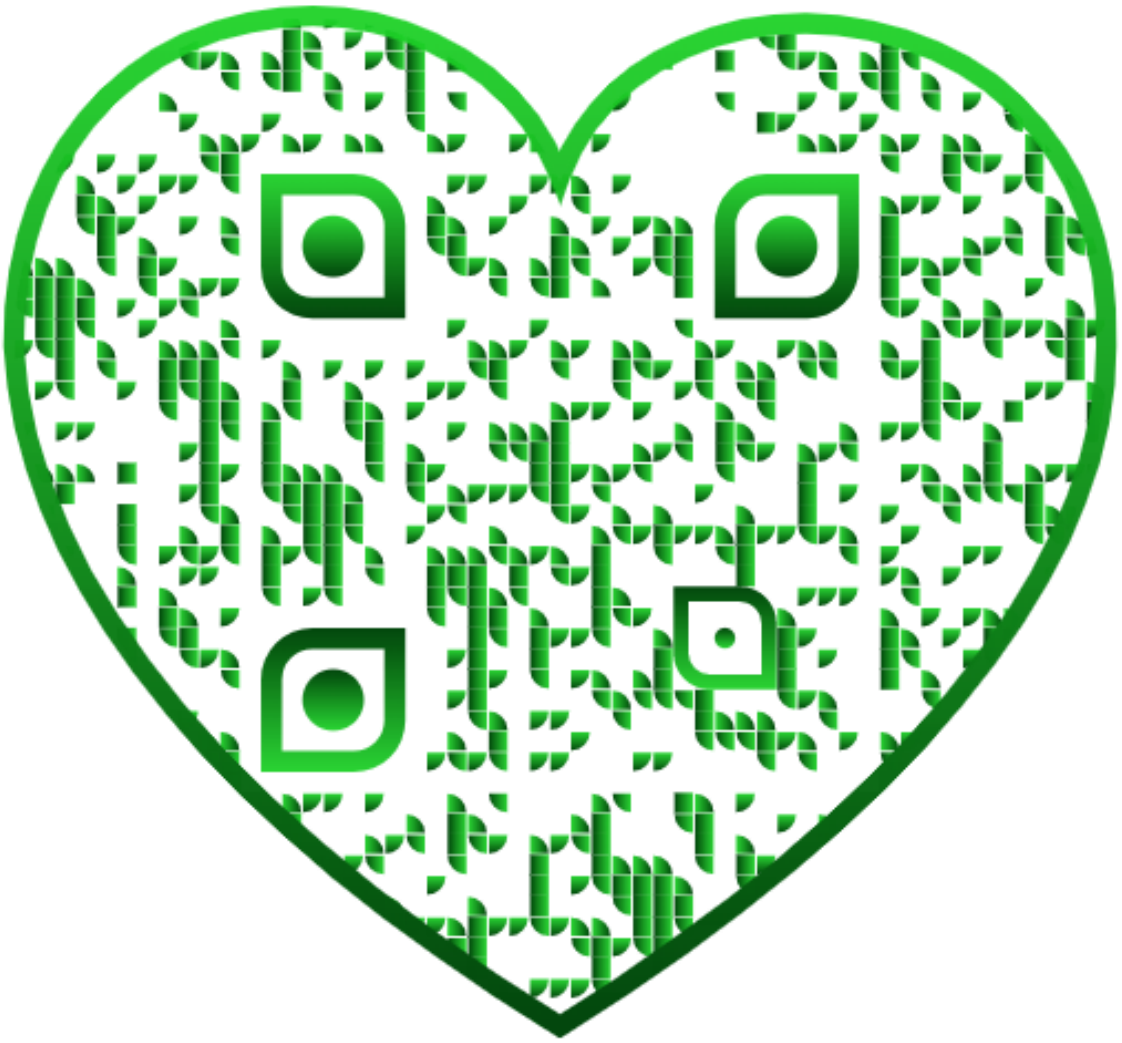

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Rhythm

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HELLO AND WELCOME BACK TO RHYTHM...

Firstly, I hope that this issue finds you and yours all keeping safe and well during these crazy times...

Who could possibly have imagined what 2020 had in store for us when we were last all together in March? But I'm thrilled that *Rhythm* is back up and running and that we are finally able to pay our long-overdue tribute to the mighty Neil Peart.

Neil once told *Rhythm* that, "respect is something that needs to be earned continually". It's a quote of his that always makes me smile because, throughout his incredible career, he was always challenging himself, always moving forward – inspiring a generation of drummers in the process. As a journalist, I can't tell you the number of times I have sat and watched a drummer's face light up as they told me about that game-changing moment when they saw, or heard, Neil play for the first time, and how life would never quite be the same again! It's a testament to the man – and the musician – that so many people have paid their respects since his passing, and a heartfelt thank you goes to everyone who has shared their memories and stories of him with *Rhythm*.

It seems only fitting to also remember Freddie Gruber in this issue, the drum teacher who had such a profound effect on Neil's, and so many other drummers', playing. We are delighted, therefore, to have three of his friends – Steve Smith, Dave Weckl and Joey Heredia – remember the inimitable New Yorker who always had a story to tell!

Also this month, we welcome back Steve White, Steve 'Smiley' Barnard, and Dame Evelyn Glennie and Rich Kass. The Police's 'So Lonely' – featuring the one-and-only Stewart Copeland – is Sarah Jones's pick in our 'Tracks That Inspired A Generation', and Ian Thomas chooses his 'Six of the Best'. Pete Riley and the Beats Working team are on hand to help you become a better drummer; and our featured play-along tracks this month are two of Rush's heavy hitters: 'The Spirit Of Radio' and 'Tom Sawyer'.

We hope you enjoy the issue; it is a very special one...

Louise Hung

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Contributing to this issue...

David West

"I still remember my first job for *Rhythm* some 16 years ago, heading out to interview Andy Strachan from The Living End armed with a handheld tape recorder and a notepad. Too many interviews to count later, I've met my heroes, like Steve Gadd and Zigaboo Modeliste, and even faced the withering gaze of Ginger Baker and lived to tell the tale. I'm thrilled that *Rhythm* is now back in action!"

Best Thing Done During Lockdown?
"I bought a set of congas just before lockdown, so I've filledmy time working on my Afro-Cuban vocabulary, getting to grips wth the Tumbao, Guaguanco, Mozambique and Songo."

Chuck Parker

Chuck is a freelance drummer and writer who has written several features for *Rhythm* over the last decade and who has performed and recorded with a variety of bands, as well as teaching drums. He loves to share his passion for the instrument through his playing, teaching and writing.

Best Thing Done During Lockdown?
"Lockdown hit just as I was starting work on my Neil Peart article for *Rhythm*, and that time gave me a wonderful opportunity to reassess, and marvel at, the vast impact this man – and his music – has had on all aspects of my life. If there was a definition of a role model, for me it's Neil Peart. RIP Professor."

Rich Chamberlain

Raised on his dad's AC/DC records, Rich has been channelling his inner Phil Rudd since he was a nipper, with varying degrees of success. And while today there's little danger of him laying down thundering grooves at a packed stadium any time soon, since first joining the *Rhythm* team 10 years ago, Rich has been able to put questions to rock royalty such as the aforementioned Mr Rudd.

Best Thing Done During Lockdown?
"I used the time to listen to some of my favourite-ever albums, picking up some tips from immersing myself in the playing of Phil Rudd, Dave Grohl and Travis Barker."

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Image: Claire Davis

DRUM HEROES HELP US THROUGH LOCKDOWN!

It would be ever-so-depressingly easy for us to list all of the shows, events and sessions that have been canned due to the ongoing pandemic. However, not only are a slew of awesome events starting to come thick and fast, but there are also plenty of players who have been doing sterling work during lockdown, allowing fans a more-intimate-than-ever-insight into the world of the drum megastar.

One of the finest examples of this has been the treasure trove of online projects, which have seen cosy at-home interviews and conversations, live streaming, in-depth masterclasses and the opportunity of one-to-one lessons with a plethora of big names.

Drum companies in their droves have stepped up and provided access to top endorsees – with players sharing everything from top tips and techniques, favourite gear, tales from the road and the studio, right through to the drummers that inspired and influenced them, and how they have been keeping busy during lockdown... We really have been spoilt.

With players more available than ever, drummers everywhere have also had the opportunity to enhance their learning enormously during these strange times – one positive to be found on a pretty bleak landscape for musicians as a whole. From the Groove Master masterclasses – where tutors have included Mark Guiliana, Todd Sucherman, Peter Erskine and David Garibaldi – to Russ Gleason and Neal Wilkinson's popular 'Drum Hangs', connecting players worldwide with a host of special guests, including Jim Keltner, James Gadson, Vinnie Colaiuta and Steve Jordan.

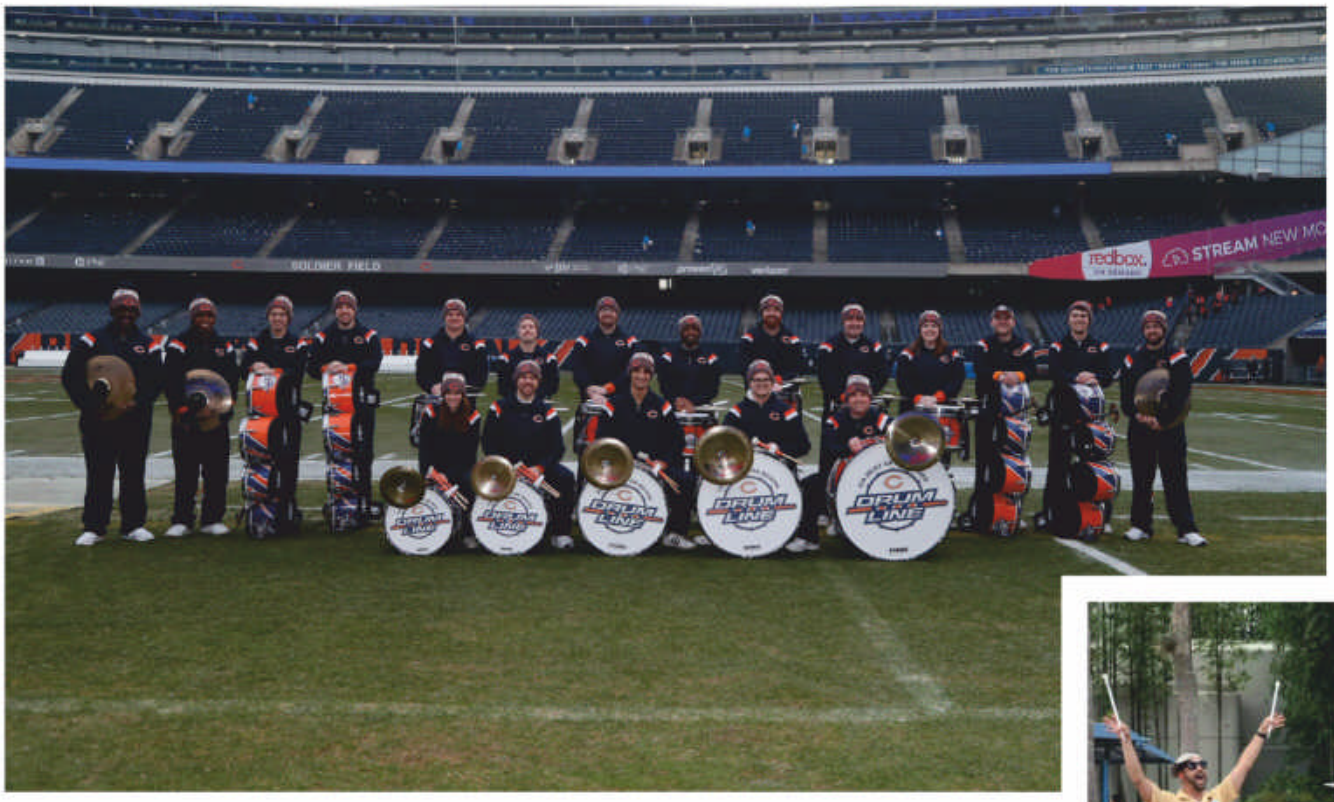
Mike Dolbear has perhaps been the hardest-working lockdown interviewer, amassing – at the time of writing – an impressive 86 live chats with a host of stars, including Aaron Spears, Thomas Lang, Jojo Mayer, Kaz Rodriguez, Virgil Donati and Matt Helders. "I wanted to do something to entertain the drumming community, so I thought I would give Instagram Live a go," Mike told *Rhythm*. "Never did I think I'd end up doing this many, though!"

Heavy hitters, like Sheila E, Steve Smith, Stanton Moore, Dave Weckl, Ash Soan, Daru Jones and Craig Blundell – to name but a few – have all taken this opportunity to provide masterclasses and lessons via the web. Craig explained the ideas behind his interactive weekly Sunday masterclass series: "I've really tried to do something different, and the live learning experience in these sessions is unique and immersive. Everyone feels welcome and accepted – regardless of standard, or ability – and, most importantly, it's a shot of positivity for all involved in these uncertain times." It just goes to show that us drummers will always find a way!

With social distancing looking to be here for a good while yet, it's awesome to see opportunities for live music starting to appear. Simon Hanson (pictured) will be behind the kit for Squeeze when they have the honour of performing the very first socially distanced gig at the London O2 Arena on Saturday, 5 December, – while other bands, artists and venues, including Southern rock heroes Black Stone Cherry, Andy Gangadeen and The Bays, Pete Lockett (with his new improvisational project, Lockett-Vettese Band), Hit Like A Girl, Steve Gadd, Metallica, Ronnie Scott's and the 2020 PAS convention amongst many others, have all live streamed performances and shows during this period.

So, while 2020 won't go down as a vintage year for live music, it *has* been the year that we have been able to connect in possibly more intimate ways with our drum heroes, and long may that continue past the pandemic, into 2021 and beyond.

MARCHING BACK TO RHYTHM



We are delighted to announce that Stu Warmington's marching column will be returning to *Rhythm* in Issue 298. After 22 years' service in the Corps of Drums of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Stu recently joined forces with the British Drum Company, as co-owner and manager of the Marching Division. In his new column, Stu will be exploring the crossover between drum set and marching, giving readers an insight into the world of drumlines around the world. Also back by popular demand is his 'coffee break challenge' – so be prepared!

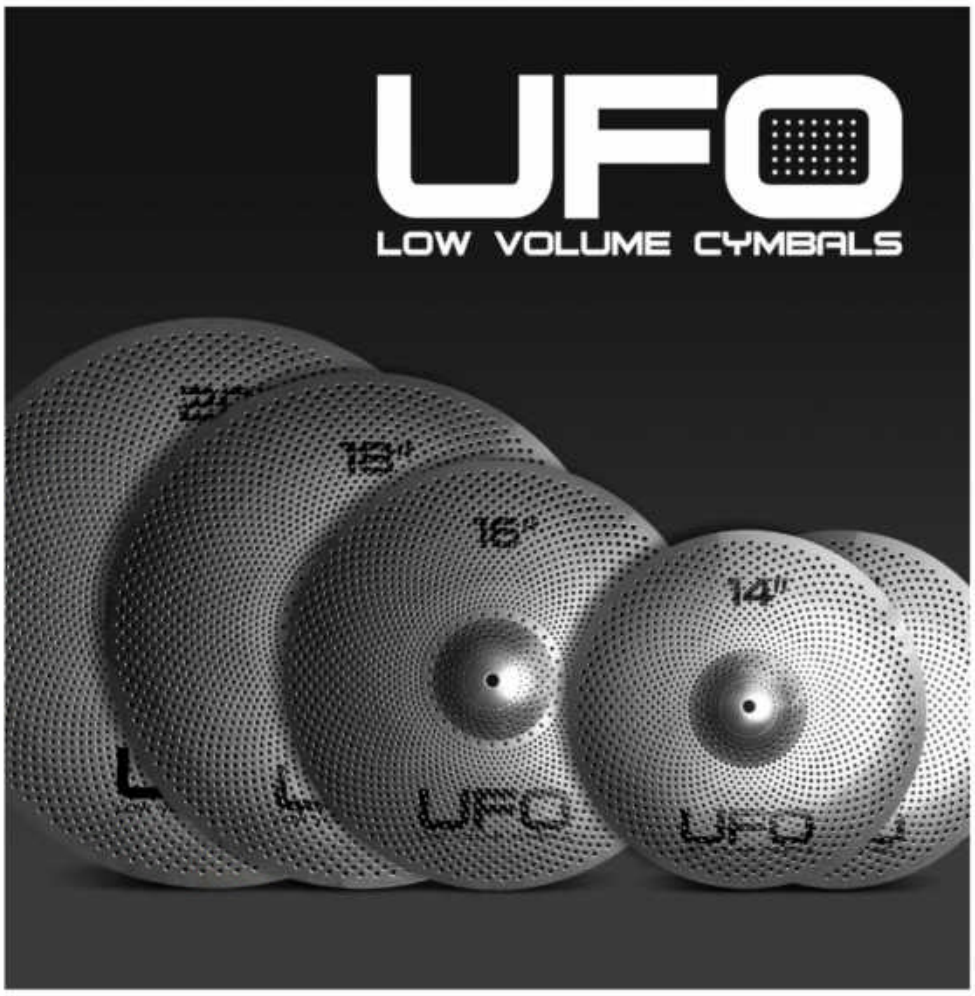
Stu had this to say about the launch of his new series:

"Due to COVID-19, I'm fully aware that many of our readers won't have had the chance to tour and travel this year, so I'd like to take you on a journey of my own. This will be similar to the last set of columns (Issues 268-279), but this time I'll be introducing you to drumlines and personalities that you probably won't have heard of before. I'm looking forward to changing that and interrogating them for your benefit, so follow me around the world as we delve into the weird and wonderful world of drumlines."

SPEED KING

THE RETURN
OF
THE KING

SPEED REMASTERED



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SNAPSHOT
This Moment In History

John Bonham
31st May 1948 – 25th September 1980

Friday, 25th September 2020 marked the 40th anniversary of the untimely passing of John Henry Bonham. Long-time friend and former *Melody Maker* writer Chris Welch shares one particularly poignant quote from the Led Zeppelin sticksman:

"I got blacklisted in Birmingham when I was recording some demos with Way Of Life. The guy who ran Zella studios said my drumming was, 'Too loud. There's no future in it'. Nowadays, you can't play loud enough. Years later, I sent him a Led Zeppelin gold disc with a note which said: 'Thanks for your advice'."

Image: Jeffrey Mayer/Getty

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Introducing

YUYA MAETA

Former BABYMETAL drummer gets his fusion groove on

As a child, Yuya Maeta wanted to be a singer, but in the small town where he grew up, the only band with an opening needed a drummer. "So why did I first pick up drumsticks? Because I wanted to sing," he says. Since making the switch, he's drummed for Blue Man Group and BABYMETAL, and his fusion group, KARI BAND, has recently released their second record, *Nimaime*, packed with dazzling musicianship.

How did you learn to play?

"I'm completely self-taught. I guess I was a narrow-minded kid, as there were no drummers that I respected in Japan at that time. The first person I looked up to when I started playing drums at 13 was David Silveria of Korn – he was my first drum hero. I started to read a lot of books and watch a lot of DVDs about drums from then on."

How do you create your drum parts?

"The first thing that I always do for a performance is to create a pulse inside of me and let it groove. Listening to the other musicians and interpreting what they express is very important, but what I use as a guide is the pulse that I create."

Did you track *Nimaime* with the other musicians or by yourself?

"We recorded at a studio owned by King Records in Japan. I think it's important to see the other people involved in the recording process – and for them to watch you during this process. It puts me in an amazing place witnessing someone else's wonderful performance in front of my eyes in real time. When it's my turn to record, I'm pumped."

How does recording compare to playing live for you?

"If it's a gig, we have rehearsals so that we can try this or that, but there normally isn't any pre-production for recordings. We can't record drums four measures at a time like guitar or bass. If we do, I believe it will sound mechanical and boring. I have a rule to do things within three takes, since I feel the sound loses energy, freshness and quality if I do more."

Have you been surprised by the international success of BABYMETAL?

"Actually, I haven't. I was a member of the backing band around the time that BABYMETAL become popular worldwide, but I never doubted their success. I felt it from the moment I saw them perform for the first time."

What have been the highlights of your career so far?

"It's absolutely now. I won auditions to play with Blue Man Group and BABYMETAL, but that's all in the past. Now, I am able to release my own band's music, and I have an interview with an overseas drum magazine, even though I am just a drummer from a small town on a small island that's very far away! I am honoured to be featured in *Rhythm*. The greatest moment is always now for me." **David West**

Key kit: *Sonor SQ2 drums, Sabian cymbals*

Sarah Jones

'So Lonely'
The Police – *Outlandos d'Amour* (1978)
Drummer: Stewart Copeland

"I first heard 'So Lonely' when I was about 14 years old, watching a Police tribute band with my dad at a local pub in my hometown of Hereford, deep in the English countryside. The drummer was doing all sorts of exciting stuff, and I wanted to play like that!

"When I later heard Stewart Copeland on the track, it was all about the hi-hats... I loved how much detail I could hear in them alone – the rush and persistence in the choruses and how much bounce they added. The whole song sounded so live, with everyone pushing forward in places and playing off each other perfectly. The track also sounded so dry – especially the drums – and, because The Police were a three piece, there's so much space. You really get that sense of them playing in a room together with such intensity.

"Leading up to me hearing The Police for the first time, I was listening to a lot of '70s rock – Deep Purple being a favourite. Hearing 'So Lonely', where the drums are so upfront in the song, felt very pleasing. The drumming is so tight, yet scrappy at the same time, and has so much energy and freeness. The hi-hat work in particular – all the flourishes in the verses as accents after lyrics – was something I'd never heard before. One of my favourite things is the way that a fill sometimes sounds like a very last-minute decision, that is almost as much of a surprise to Stewart himself as it is for the listener! The fill after the guitar and harmonica solo is particularly satisfying and one that I have found myself using on many occasions.

"When I started playing in a post-punk band called New Young Pony Club, we used to play without a click in the early days, and I really wanted to emulate, and capture, the energy that Stewart Copeland brought to The Police. I liked playing slightly ahead of the beat on purpose, which suited the types of venues and crowds we were playing to. It was a fun time! Stewart made his entry into choruses so obvious and punchy, and I tried to do the same, because I felt it was important when you've got a dancefloor audience.

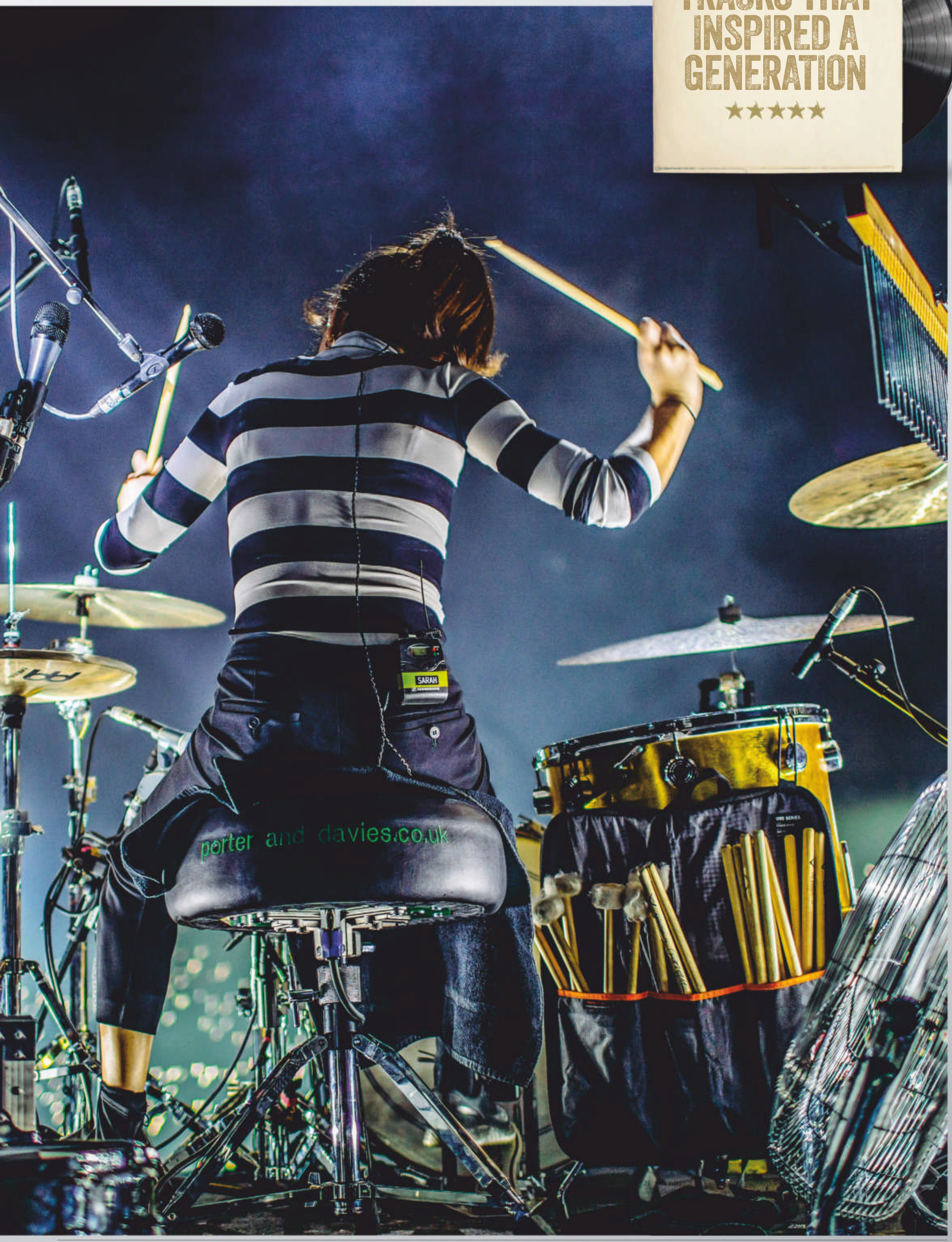
"I was always keen to play Tama drums, like Stewart. When I joined them, I changed my setup from having two toms to three and would call them regularly to see if they had any vintage Octobans lying about... They eventually found me four, and I set about trying to position them in a place where I could reach them!

"I also got into buying vintage Tama kits – first the Swingstar and then a Granstar. After watching live videos of Stewart, I took the bottom heads off the toms.

"I've not met Stewart – yet – but it's pretty hard to explain how much of an influence someone has been on you, so I'm not sure I'd do a very good job if I did. Watching The Police play at the Isle of Wight Festival many years ago was fantastic, though."

TRACKS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

★★★★★



Images: Hélène Pambrun

YOU CAN'T STOP ROCK 'N' ROLL!

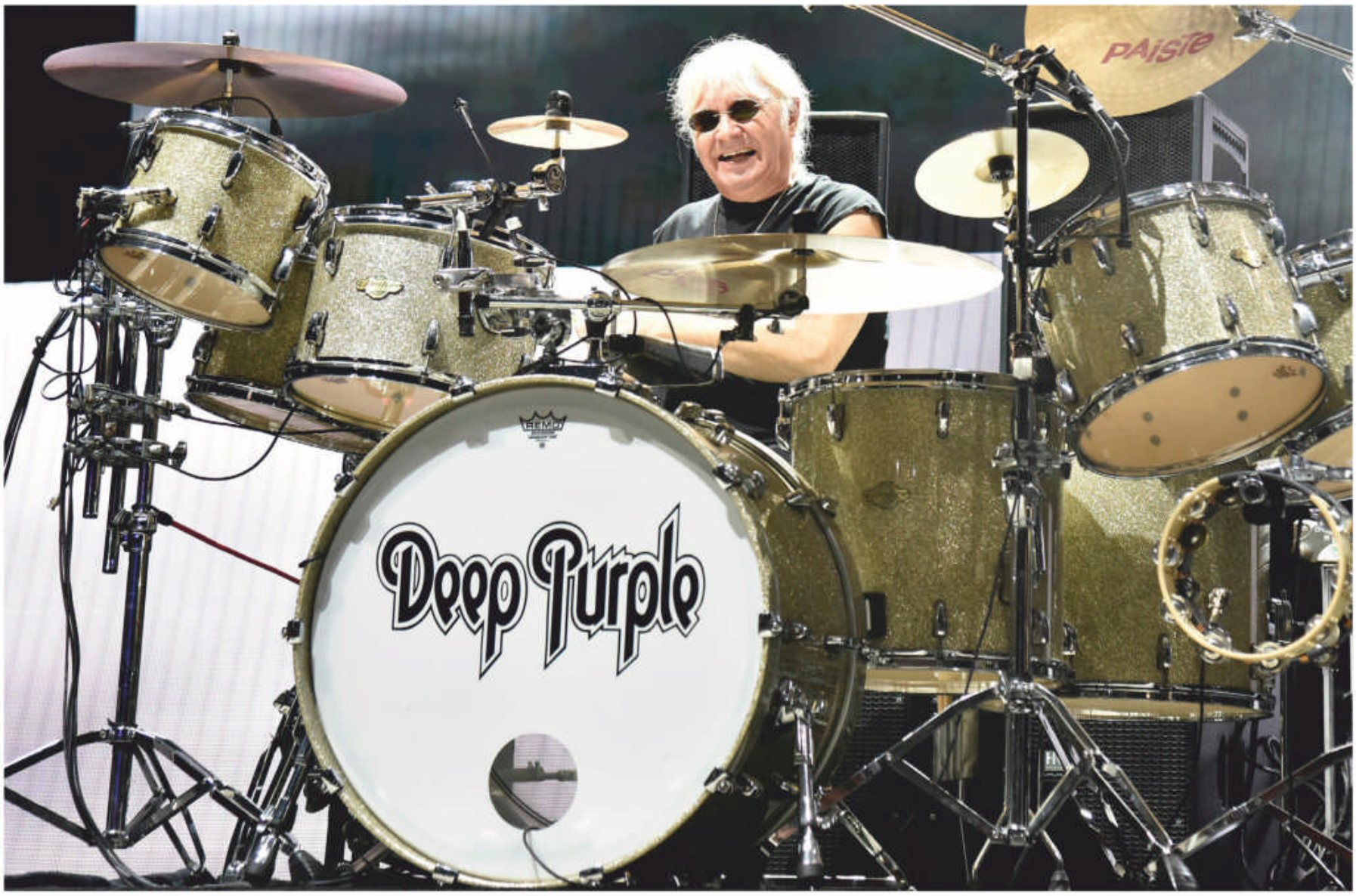


Image: Tim Mosenfelder/Getty Images

They say the best art comes out of the direst of times, so on those terms, we are due for an absolute deluge of incredible music, right? Well, the signs are pretty darn bright already, as some of drumming's biggest names have been hard at work during these unprecedented times...

How's this for an event? AC/DC have released their first album in six years – and fan-favourite Phil Rudd is back at the drumstool! *Power Up*, DC's 17th studio outing, dropped earlier this month, with Rudd coming back in from the cold after his much-publicised legal and health issues.

AC/DC aren't the only classic rock act to release a hotly anticipated album in 2020 – Deep Purple beat them to the punch by a clear three months with *Whoosh!* Ian Paice and co dropped their 21st record in August, and it is a belter. The record features 'And The Address', a track first recorded on The Purps' 1968 debut album, with Paice being the only player to perform on both versions. Nice.

For you rock fans, there's even more to celebrate, with Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band having released new music (*Letter To You*) late October – and what's that?? It's only Foo Fighters announcing the release of their latest album this coming February. Not too shabby!

From rock icons to prog titans – Dream Theater's live shows are always a mind-bending spectacle, and you can hear Mike Mangini's crew run through a stunning set in *Distant Memories: Live In London*, out this month. As is The Pineapple Thief's latest offering, *Versions Of The Truth*, featuring Gavin Harrison. "I've taken a lot of liberties and composed (what I hope to be) interesting rhythmic designs that are unique for each tune", Gavin told *Rhythm*.

Travis Barker scored a Number One US album –*Tickets To My Downfall* – thanks to his collaboration with Machine Gun Kelly. The Blink sticksman teamed up with the rapper (who lest we forget played Tommy Lee in the movie adaptation of *The Dirt*) for a pop-punk masterpiece that is sure to trouble many a '2020 Best Of' list in the very near future.

Fellow drum hero Cindy Blackman Santana also released a cracker of a record. Her first solo offering, *Give The Drummer Some*, runs Cindy's musical gamut, stopping off at rock, pop, jazz and more, and features six-stringed talent Carlos Santana (who Cindy is also married to!) as well as Metallica's Kirk Hammett. Super cool.

Meanwhile, proving again that the collective drum community has the largest heart, an array of players, including Cherisse Osei, Emily Dolan Davies and Cat Myers, have joined forces to record 'Little Drummer Girl', a female-drummer-filled charity single in aid of Action For Children and Tiny Changes.

The good causes don't end there! Ray Luzier is among the stars appearing on a charity cover of Faith No More's 'We Care A Lot' for Roadie Relief, the brainchild of drum-tech-to-the-stars Yeti Ward, which is raising money for road crew out of work because of COVID.

As if that wasn't enough, this year has also seen new music from bands such as Deftones, The Killers, Idles and a heap more.

Not bad 2020, not bad at all...

Image: Brian O'Connor/Getty Images

Bobby Orr

15th August 1928 – 12th March 2020

Veteran jazz, big band and session drummer Bobby Orr died in March, aged 91. A prominent player on the London jazz scene in the '50s and '60s, which included a stint as the house drummer at Ronnie Scott's, Bobby also played as a founder member of the ground-breaking Joe Harriott Quintet. As well as accompanying international recording stars, such as Bing Crosby, Billy Eckstine and Sammy Davis Jr., Bobby also did three tours in the '70s with the legendary Benny Goodman Orchestra – the only British drummer to get the coveted gig. Remembering a particular gig at the Festival Hall, Bobby told *Rhythm*:

"Benny Goodman said to me, 'That thing you do with your teeth, put it into the second-half before 'Sing, Sing, Sing'. So I played Mozart's 'Turkish March' – with an HB pencil – and brought the house down!"

A full tribute to Bobby will appear in a future issue of *Rhythm*.

Pearl

Welcome back

Smiley

THE ALARM

From classic rock to trip hop and in between...

Steve 'Smiley' Barnard was given his nickname years ago and it's obvious why it's stuck. Mr Grohl, move over as Smiley may actually be the happiest man in music...

We hear you have been a little under the weather recently...

"I had the dreaded COVID. Luckily, I just had the loss of smell and taste and felt a bit rough for one day, but that was it. There was the minor inconvenience of telling my mates who I had been out with that they had to stay at home for two weeks! But now I'm fine."

What kind of impact has the pandemic had on your diary?

"I'm lucky because I have my own studio, and when we went into lockdown I had a few projects that I had just started, so I could carry those on. The studio has kept me sane and busy. I did some bits with The Alarm and an offshoot from The Alarm with Billy Duffy from The Cult called ColourSound – that album is finished, and it's a great rocking record! I had a run of '80s sessions: Ian McNabb, Owen Paul and Chesney Hawkes, one after the other. Then I did ex-England cricketer Mark Butcher's third album."

You've also recently released a book, *Clang! Smiley Drops A Few*

"The timing was amazing, it was ready to go just as we went into lockdown. The term 'clang' refers to dropping a name. I have met all of these people and had all of these stories from when I played with Robbie [Williams], Joe Strummer and loads of famous people. It is very tongue in cheek and takes the mickey out of myself. It's not, 'Then I played this session...', it's more, 'Then I went on Top of the Pops and messed something up and the next day everyone was laughing at me in Tesco'. People ask what was Dave Grohl like when I met him, or Chad Smith – it's in the book! I've just finished recording the audiobook version, too. That will be out in December and was the hardest thing I've ever done.

"PEOPLE ASK WHAT WAS DAVE GROHL LIKE WHEN I MET HIM, OR CHAD SMITH..."

"Have you ever tried to read an entire book properly with every word right? It's crazy! I sounded like Alan Partridge at the start, and then I remembered people had said they liked the book because it reads like I'm telling stories in the pub, so I got into the flow of it. It took a few chapters to get my flow. The first three chapters took about a week!"

How is 2021 shaping up for you?

"If the world gets back to normal, I've got a load of European festivals next summer with Archive; The Alarm will do European and American dates and Mark Butcher has shows lined up. ColourSound are maybe doing shows in America... It's like the football: we're just waiting for the fans to be let back in!"

You can order *Clang!* from www.gatecrashthepartybooks.com.

Rich Chamberlain

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Welcome back

Steve White

SESSIONS, HAGUE AND WHITE, THE FAMILY SILVER

Style Council legend looks back while moving forward

Steve White may be best known for his groove-filled drumming with Paul Weller and in The Style Council, but don't overlook his soulful beats with Hague And White...

What's the concept behind your instructional book, *Steve White's Art Of Drumming*?

"I must give credit to Russ Tarley, the co-author – he's been the driving force to get this done, and helping me to do my educational material for 10 years or so. Pretty much everything in there are things that I've found helpful to be a musical drummer, a drummer working in bands. There's a lot of technique: coordination, working with a click track, areas of drumming and applications that I've found that supported my attempts to be a good, musical drummer. Some of these exercises go back to when I was 17, 18, and have been kept in diaries and booklets."

It must help that you've been able to try out this material at events like the Freddie Gee Drum Academy?

"Without a shadow of a doubt, and also my work at Trinity Laban, at Goldsmiths and the other educational establishments that I've been lucky enough to be involved in. It was lovely that some of my former students like Greenie – fantastic drummer – Tweeted saying, 'Look, this stuff really works, I can prove it'. That was really nice to see. Some of the original exercises in there were influenced by work that I did with Bob Armstrong, especially in the linear exercises, so it's a very wide spectrum of material."

The subtitle is 'A Life Behind The Drums'...

"We wanted to make something a little more personal, so I gathered up pictures of me on the road and with other drummers that I've met, like Nick Mason, Steve Gadd, Clem Cattini, all these great musicians. I wanted to have a little snapshot of some of my experiences. Russ came up with the idea of a discography, because thankfully I've been able to play on some great tunes, some recognisable hits since the '80s, and I wanted to have them all in one place."

Tell us about the Sky Arts documentary *Long Hot Summers: The Story Of The Style Council*.

"We filmed a documentary a year ago, and it's come out rather good. On the back of it, Polydor remastered a triple vinyl album, which is currently top of the pre-orders on Amazon and various platforms, so there's been a resurgence of interest in The Style Council. All of us have contributed to it, in a very fond way. There's no angst there, no bitterness or issues. Subsequently, it's come out as a very warm and affectionate look at the band. When we first toured, there were four girls and four boys, which I think was actually really progressive. I look back thinking, 'God, the lead singer was 25, the drummer was 18, and it stands up'. That's the abiding impression we all got: that the music has really stood the test of time."

How does it feel to listen to recordings you made as a teenager?

"With my YouTube channel, I've been looking at songs like 'Sunflower', 'Changing Man', 'Up In Suzes' Room' and deconstructing the influences, and I've uploaded one recently about *Café Bleu*. I listen to it, make notes and try to reabsorb the influences and what we were thinking at the time. With *Café Bleu*, on a song called 'Me Ship Came In!', I'm playing almost a Beguine rhythm, something I was taught as a very young drummer playing in the school dance band. Then 'Dropping Bombs On The Whitehouse', I'm doing my terrible impressions of Buddy Rich and counting off the band. Some of the drumming is quite out there and quite mature for somebody who was barely 18. It was quite a revelation listening back to it."

And you're working with the guys from Hague And White?

"We started off putting out the album *The Eleventh Hour* last year. I was really pleased with it, and, commercially, I think it deserved to do better. Rather than being too negative about that, I thought, 'Where can we go to find a more valid market for what we're doing?' That's when we did the music for a show called *Cold Call* last year for Channel 5. I've been setting up this new business called Real Movement Music, which is a TV soundtrack and library company with all my old Players, Jazz Renegades stuff. It's actually really creatively rewarding. Setting up something that has a foot in making original music and looking for a home in visuals and TV makes sense to us. You don't have to look at us, you can just hear us."

David West

Out Now: *Steve White's Art Of Drumming* is available from www.hudsonmusic.com

Key Kit: *Yamaha drums, Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, Remo drumheads, Protection Racket cases*

Image: James Cumpsty

THE FUTURE

Incorporate a daily routine that provides focus and positivity says **Emily Dolan Davies**

Well, I think the buzz word of the year is 'unprecedented'. We're into November 2020, and I don't know about you, but I'm feeling just as uncertain about the future as at the beginning of this global pandemic.

Whilst the future of gigs, the music industry and the world is up in the air, I wanted to share with you how I've managed to keep hopeful and motivated – and maybe even take away something positive from this inherently awful situation.

The first, and definitely the most impactful, thing I did back in March and continue to do is implement a daily routine. In a world of massive uncertainty, to have something I can control within my own little sphere has given me back a small amount of power – and, as a self-confessed control freak, this gives me great relief.

So, what does a daily routine need to look like? Does it have to be a minute-by-minute plan laid out day

after day for 12 hours a day, seven days a week? If that makes you happy, then, yes! If it doesn't, then, absolutely not! Just one thing you do every day for five minutes can make a huge difference.

What should you focus on? Well, that depends on you; there's no single answer for everyone. Start by asking yourself: What would you like your world to look like on the other side of this? The answer might be focusing on your health (mental or physical), taking your drumming to the next level, learning a new skill, strengthening connections with loved ones, being more mindful, anything you like.

Personally, my daily focus is on exercise, upping my skillset (in drumming and other areas), connecting with others and eating nice, healthy food. I try to cover most, if not all, of these areas every day. I don't always succeed, but at the end of each day if I feel that I'm just a little better version of me than when I woke up, I consider that a win!

Whatever you choose to do, or not do over this period of time, please be kind to yourself. There's no 'right' way to get through this, just try some stuff, notice how you're feeling about it, then minimise the things that make you feel bad and maximise the things that make you feel good.

Sending you lots of love from my own little world to yours.

www.EmilyDolanDavies.com

Rudiment Of The Month

The Flamacue

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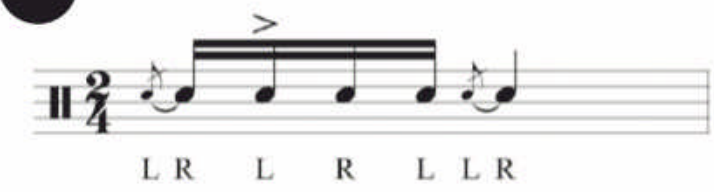
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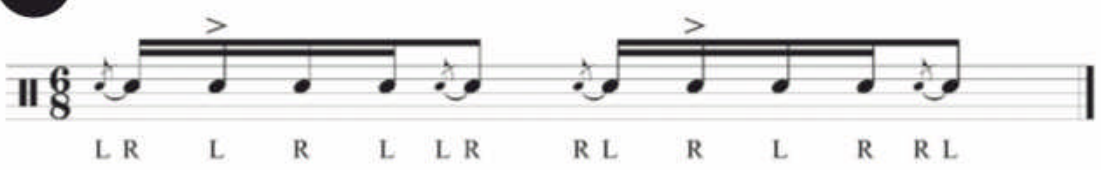
The Flamacue is one of the more challenging flam rudiments as it requires an accented note to be played immediately after an unaccented flam. In other words, the flam is played with both the grace note and the note that would normally be accented at the same low volume, but then the hand that plays the grace note *immediately* has to then play an accented note. Finally, after two more unaccented single strokes, the figure is completed with another unaccented flam.

As if this wasn't tricky enough, the challenge really lies in not only being able to do this leading with either hand (Exs 1 and 2), but also moving it from hand to hand (Ex 3).

Finally in Ex 4, the duration of the final flam is reduced from a quarter-note to an eighth-note and so the time signature from 4/4 to 6/8. All of these examples can also be played playing the final flam as a regularly accented flam, which, in the final example, introduces a syncopated dotted eighth-note rhythm.

OFFBEATS

PHIL'S BACK!

Phil Collins has been snapped entering the studio for rehearsals with Tony Banks and Mike Rutherford ahead of Genesis's *The Last Domino?* tour. The run is now due to kick off in April 2021 and will feature Phil's son Nic behind the kit. We can't wait!

VIOLA SMITH RIP

Pioneering big band drummer Viola Smith has passed away at the mighty age of 107. Smith blazed a trail for female drummers the world over with her work from the '30s onwards. She passed away in her sleep at her California home, just a month shy of her 108th birthday. RIP Viola.

Image: FPG/Archive Photos

5 SECONDS OF SOLO

Ashton Irwin, drummer for Aussie pop sensations 5 Seconds of Summer, has released his debut solo album, *Superbloom*. The record delves deeper than Ashton has ever done before, including the single 'Skinny, Skinny' which addresses the topic of body image. Fret not though, 5SOS fans, it sounds like he has no intention of leaving the band behind, saying: "It brings me the greatest joy of all that I am in a band that allows me to create freely inside and outside of it".

WIN WHITEY ONE-ON-ONE

Yamaha have teamed up with Steve White to offer one drummer a very special experience. Head to Yamaha UK's website, download White's latest track, take a listen and then upload your own performance by December 11th. Doing so will enter you into a competition to win a signed Recording Brass snare, EAD-10 and, get this, a one-on-one masterclass with White!

ROYAL STAR KIT

Vintage CIRCA 1972/3

This well-preserved MIJ Royal Star kit is a lovely example of one of the last kits with the Star name

Writer: **Geoff Nicholls** | Images: **James Cumpsty**

Vintage drum collecting does not always mean breaking the bank. Part of the fun can be in seeking out less-fashionable drums from yesteryear, which are still eminently playable and of good quality and with a different sound from the run-of-the-mill modern kit.

In a recent issue of *Rhythm* we featured a Silky Blue Japanese Star kit from circa 1972. Now we have a follow-up, which is a grander-named Royal Star kit, one of the last kits bearing the Star name.

No prizes for recognising that Star was the precursor to Tama, which still uses the name Star for its top kits today. According to Ralf Bornmann, who mans an essential vintage Star site from Germany (www.star-drums.de), the company was rebranded as Tama in 1974 because there was a legal obstacle to using the name Star in the USA.

Our kit is another well-preserved example of what have become known to fans as MIJ, or Made In Japan, kits, which foreshadowed the emergence of the big three brands: Tama, Pearl and Yamaha (who gradually became market leaders from the mid-'70s).

Finished in Silky White, the set belongs to Mark Jeffs of the UK's Rusty Drums (www.rustydrums.co.uk), who says, "Most of these MIJ kits copied the big American manufacturers' styling, but strangely this Royal Star seems a bit more Anglo/Germanic. Certainly, it resembles Sonor in the lug casings and with the 13"x8" size of the rack tom".

Meanwhile, the Silky White finish is indistinguishable from Premier's Grey Shimmer of the same period. Star offered a mind-boggling number (50-plus) of finishes, as did other MIJ manufacturers, which further adds to the delight of stumbling across one of these intriguing kits.

Back to Ralf, who confirms that the sharp profile model 924 lugs, which ran from the late '60s to the end of production in 1973/4, resemble Sonor's, as opposed to the blunter model 920 Slingerland-style lugs seen on our previous Star kit. They are also offset or staggered, Sonor-style. And the T-rods on the bass drum look suspiciously like Sonor's – not the old-fashioned tap handles of our former kit.

Another difference is in the badge. The previous kit had the standard circular design, while this has the barrel-shaped black-and-brass badge with the Royal Star legend which was reserved for Star's top-line drums.

Ralf concludes that the kit dates to "no earlier than 1972, due to the emblem-shaped (triangular) tom bracket on the small tom and the One Touch Tone Control dampers that Star mounted only in the final years and just to their higher-class drums".

As to performance, Mark Jeffs adds, "These Made-in-Japan drums pack so much punch and tone for the price. In a blind test, they give the big Americans a run for their money".

SILKY WHITE WRAP
Very similar and quite possibly identical to Premier's Grey Shimmer wrap finish of the same period.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH:
SIMON JOHN'S VINTAGE DRUM SHOW
www.vintagedrums.co.uk

1. CONTROLLED DAMPING
Ralph says, "The One Touch Tone Control damper dates to no earlier than 1972, and was mounted to Star's higher-class drum kits."

2. ROBUST SHELLS
Shells are sealed with silver-grey paint on the inside, as were Gretsch and other American drums of the period.

3. SONOR-STYLE LUGS
The influence of Sonor designs is evident in the later 924 type lugs and the bass drum 'T' rods.

STAGGERED LUGS
The 924 tension lugs on the small tom are slightly offset although there is no practical need as they do not overlap.

BASS DRUM TENSION
The 'T' rods on the bass drum hoop rods are similar to Sonor's, as are other features of this kit.

NEED TO KNOW

JAPANESE ASCENT
Star was founded in 1961 by the Japanese company Hoshino Gakki and made drums from 1965, changing the name to Tama in 1974.

RUSTY DRUMS
This month's kit comes courtesy of Mark Jeffs, owner of Rusty Drums, importers and suppliers of quality vintage drums.
Visit: www.rustydrums.co.uk

WRAP CRAZY
Check out some of those extraordinary finishes at super-fan Ralf Bornmann's dedicated Star drums site. See: www.star-drums.de

"THESE MADE-IN-JAPAN DRUMS, **PACK SO MUCH PUNCH AND TONE FOR THE PRICE.** IN A BLIND TEST, THEY GIVE THE BIG AMERICANS A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY."
OWNER, MARK JEFFS, RUSTY DRUMS

FIRST LOOK

SHINY NEW DRUM STUFF TO LUST AFTER

1. LP Red Hot Pack
Price: TBA
Coming soon: The new Chad Smith signature percussion pack from Latin Percussion includes the Red Cyclops tambourine, Medium-Pitch Jam block and the RHCP stickman's Signature Ridge Rider cowbell. The pack also includes LP's Mini Everything Rack, which provides an easy mounting option.
www.lpmusic.com

2. Gruv-X X-Click
Price: From $59.99 (£45.59)
The X-Click is the debut product from Gruv-X, launched late this year by artist Russ Miller and Bill Detamore of Pork Pie Drums. Constructed from a hybrid formula of 24 plies of American rock maple and copper, the design gives expanded volume and boosted low frequencies to the cross stick sound on any drum.
www.gruv-x.com

3. Bill Sanders Brush Pad
Price: £29
Practice your brush work on the move with Bill Sanders's latest addition. This 12" pad has a textured playing surface which replicates the feel of a coated drumhead. As an added bonus, it also works with whiteboard markers – fantastic for scribbling notes during practice.
www.practicedrumkits.co.uk

4. Aero Drums
Price: £155
Take your air drumming to the next level with this awesome bit of tech. Designed for use with a computer, movements of the reflective foot and stick sensors are picked up by the camera and translated into sweet, sweet music. Aero Drums now work with a VR headset for a fully immersive experience.
www.aerodrums.com

5. Roland TD-07KV
Price: £923
A super-compact all-mesh e-kit built around a brand-new module. The suped-up entry level TD-07 features on-board effects, bluetooth audio and coaching functions. The kit includes an 8" dual zone snare, 6" single zone toms, 10" hats and 12" crash and ride.
www.roland.com/uk

6. KEO Snare Dampener
Price: £24.99
An interesting dampening alternative from KEO Percussion. Compact enough to fit into a stick bag or pocket, this magnetic block offers a quick-and-easy solution to eliminating overtones and dialling in your perfect snare sound.
www.keopercussion.com

7. CozyDrum Pro British Rods
Price: From £6.99
Handmade using durable bamboo and birch dowels, these affordable rods are made to order and come in an enormous range of types, sizes and colours. From junior sizes to nylon models and rods for various percussion instruments, there is surely a pair for everyone.
www.cozydrum.co.uk

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Aerodrums

KEO
SNARE DAMPENER
WITH CROSS-STICK REST

COZYDRUM Custom Rods

FIRST LOOK

SHINY NEW DRUM STUFF TO LUST AFTER

1. British Drum Co. KickFix
Price: £34.99
Make the dreaded bass drum creep a thing of the past with this sleek anchoring system from BDC. The pair of small-yet-effective stoppers use Velcro to grip to your drum mat and ensure kick drums can't move an inch.
www.britishdrumco.com

2. Thick 'n' Skin
Price: From £150
To artist and drummer Zoe Walker a drumhead is not just a drumhead, it's a blank canvas waiting to be transformed into a work of art. Why not join the likes of Freddy Sheed, Ash Soan and Alex Torjussen in owning a bespoke piece from Thick 'N' Skin.
thicknskin@outlook.com

3. Porter & Davies Throne Colours
Price: Included option with P&D products
Now you can add a splash of colour to your tactile monitoring rig with a new selection of throne finishes. There are now a total of five finishes available with orders of the BC2, BC2rm, Gigster and TT6. They are Black Velvet, British Racing Green Velvet, Battleship Grey Velvet, Helmet Purple Velvet and Black 'Shiny Shiny' Vinyl.
www.porteranddavies.co.uk

4. Adoro Silent Sticks
Price: From $24 (£18)
German drum builders Adoro have pursued the quest for quiet practice from a slightly different angle. Silent Sticks use special Dual-Twist Reflex Tips to drastically lower the decibel level of an acoustic kit. There are also e-kit versions available and a Silent Bass Drum Beater.
www.silent-sticks.com

5. Mapex 'The Machine' Craig Blundell Signature Snare
Price: £629
Designed closely with prog sensation Craig Blundell and part of Mapex's Design Lab range, The Machine features 5-ply maple with a natural walnut outer ply, Aquarian heads, a trick throw-off and 16-strand Equalizer Series snare wires. We wouldn't mind this one under the tree on Christmas Day.
www.mapexdrums.com

6. DW Smartphone Holder
Price: £26.60
Whether playing to tracks or livestreaming on social media, keep your phone handy with this useful accessory from Drum Workshop. The mount will fit with any L-rod for easy positioning and also gives you somewhere to hang your headphones or IEMs.
www.dwdrums.com

7. GoPro Hero 9 Black
Price: £329
Take your drum videos in the world of 5K with the latest action cam offering from GoPro. The new model also features full-colour dual screens with live preview, interchangeable lens mods, webcam mode and direct livestreaming. Currently bundled with a free accessory pack and a year's GoPro subscription.
www.gopro.com

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FIRST LOOK

SHINY NEW DRUM STUFF TO LUST AFTER

1. Low Boy Custom Beaters
Price: From £32.99
Add some bling to your setup with a customised Low Boy beater. The wooden beaters are available in standard or lightweight versions while the online builder allows for completely bespoke colour combinations and even personalised text or logos. What a time to be alive.
www.lowboybeaters.com

2. Protection Racket Classroom Backpack
Price: £64.80
Protection Racket has a pretty awesome selection of luggage accessories – perfect for the travelling drummer (not that we're doing lots of that at the moment). The Classroom backpack features a thermo-moulded EVA foam back, a main compartment, plus an expandable drawstring pocket and a front pocket with an organiser and earphone channel.
www.protectionracket.com

3. Yamaha Steve Gadd Signature Snare
Price: £939.60
Celebrating a relationship of over 40 years, Yamaha has released a limited-edition snare (800 worldwide), developed with session legend Steve Gadd. The 14"x5½" steel shell is 1.2mm thick and finished in a stunning black nickel – as are the aluminum diecast hoops. The drum also features specially designed snare wires and a Gadd signature badge.
europe.yamaha.com

4. Rhythm Subscription
Price: £49.99
Time for a bit of shameless self-promotion. Why not treat a drummer in your life to the gift of *Rhythm* this Christmas. Get a whole year's subscription of the world's finest drum magazine for just £49.99 (UK price).
www.rhythmdrumnetwork.com

5. Suck UK Drumstick Pencils
Price: £5
Did this make you groan? Well, you're not alone. Seriously though, are you even a real drummer if you haven't found a pair of drumstick pencils under the Christmas tree? The classic stocking filler.
www.suck.uk.com

6. No Nuts Cymbal Mounting System
Price: From £11.99
The No Nuts cymbal sleeves have been a hit with us at *Rhythm*, so we're intrigued to see the range evolving. New CymRings allow for custom cymbal placement along the tapered sleeve, optimising swing and resonance. Also in the line-up is an adjustable sizzler called The SizzleNut.
www.octavedistribution.com

7. Neil Peart Mega DVD, Book & Poster Bundle
Price: £76.14
Whilst we pay tribute to a drumming legend in this issue, it seemed fitting to include this collection of Neil Peart goodies compiled by Hudson Music. The mega bundle includes the *Anatomy of a Drum Solo* DVD, *Taking Center Stage* DVD, *Taking Center Stage* book and a limited-edition Neil Peart poster.
www.hudsonmusic.com

TAYLOR HAWKINS | DRUM LESSONS | CRAIG BLUNDELL | PLAY-ALONGS | RALPH SALMINS
ANDREW MARSHALL | DRUM LESSONS | STEVE SMITH | PLAY-ALONGS | GEOFF DUGMORE
NEIL PEART RIP | PLAY-ALONGS | JIM KELTNER | DRUM LESSONS | KARL BRAZIL
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WIN! A SABIAN PARAGON PERFORMANCE SET
NEIL PEART
How Rush's prog pioneer inspired a generation
WITH SPECIAL TRIBUTES FROM DANNY CAREY, MIKE PORTNOY, TIM 'HERB' ALEXANDER, CRAIG BLUNDELL, PETER ERSKINE & MANY MORE...

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Dimmitch Pencil
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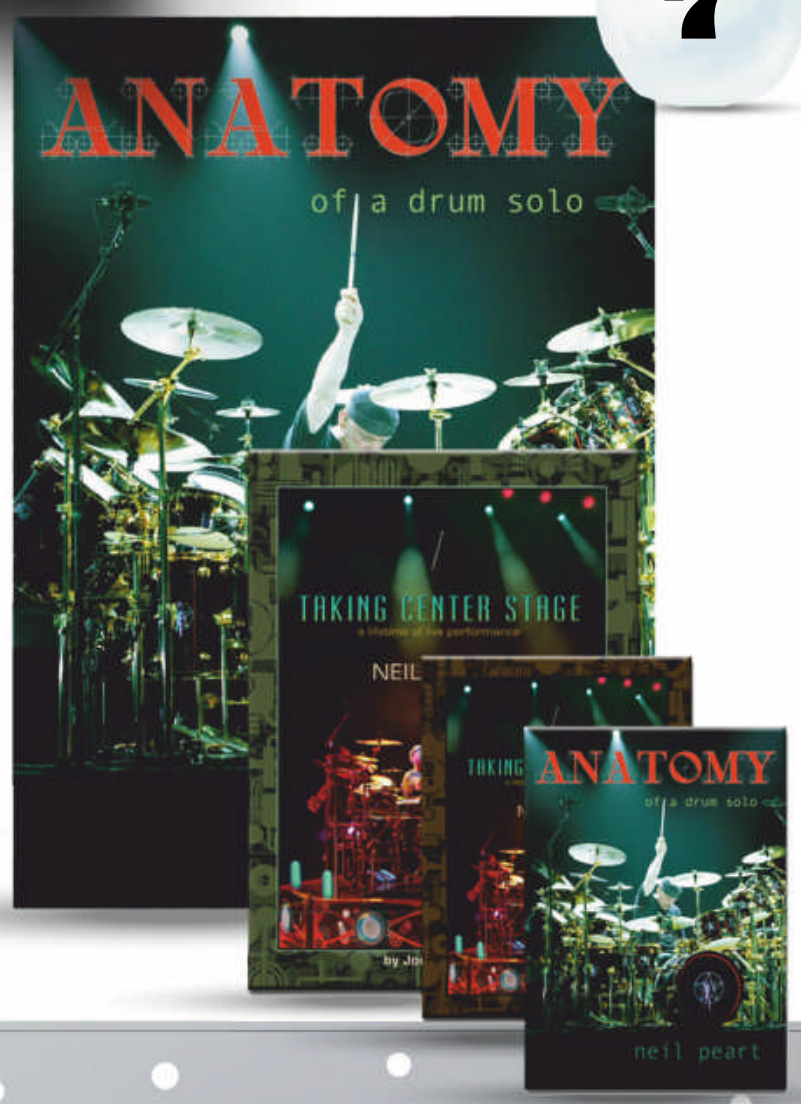
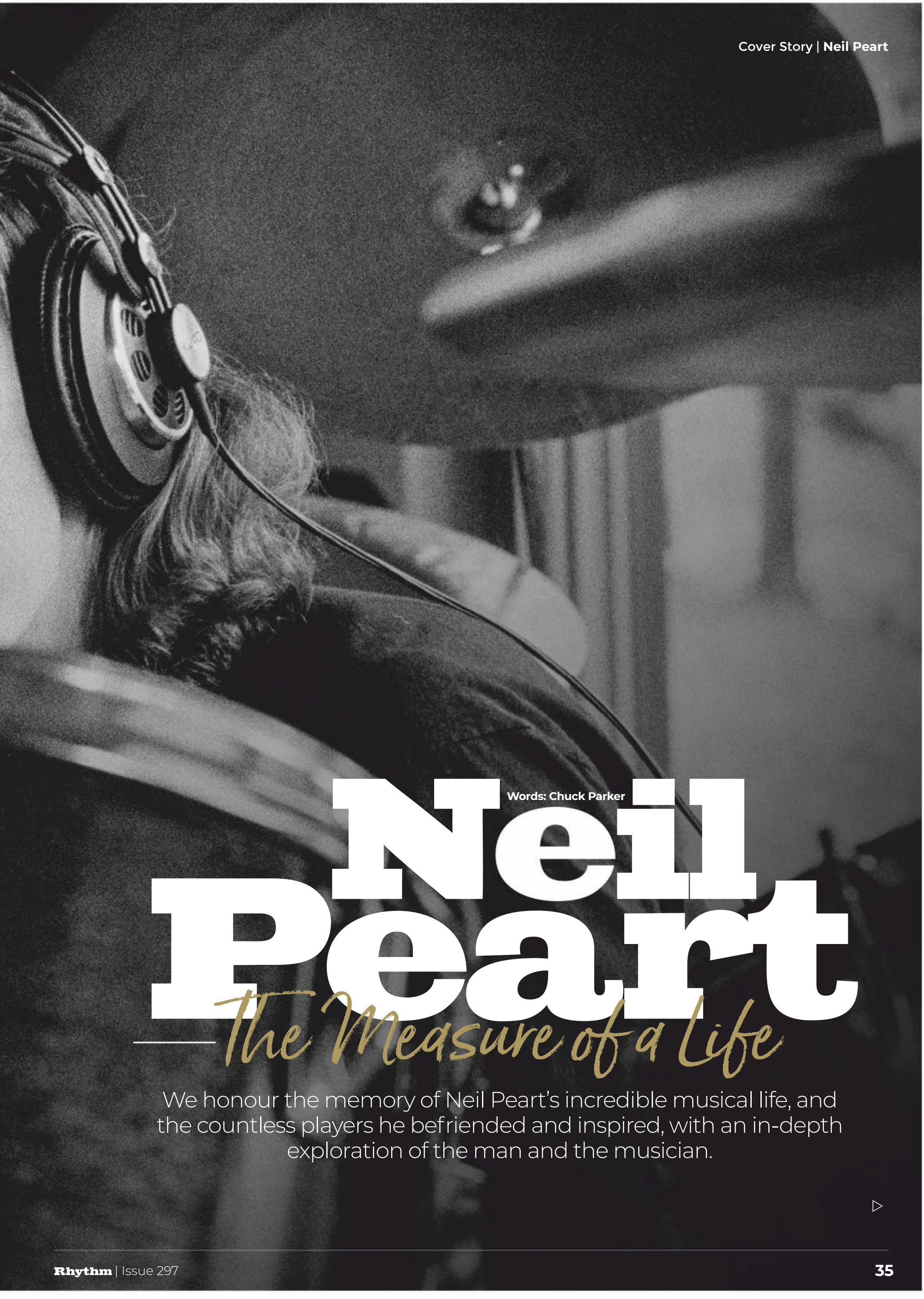

ANATOMY
of a drum solo
TAKING CENTER STAGE
NEIL
ANATOMY
neil peart

Image: Fin Costello/Getty Images



Words: Chuck Parker

Neil Peart

The Measure of a Life

We honour the memory of Neil Peart's incredible musical life, and the countless players he befriended and inspired, with an in-depth exploration of the man and the musician.

Most everyone will experience a game changing event in their life. That moment in time when you realise that nothing will be the same. This experience can occur through exposure to new knowledge or altered insight on differing opinions. In the case of musicians, this can be hearing instrumentation used in a different way or discovering a new artist for the first time.

For millions of drummers, especially those that came of age in the '70s, one of those moments was when we first heard the band Rush and their drummer and lyricist Neil Peart. My moment occurred in the back seat of a friend's Datsun B210 in early January of 1977, right after Christmas break.

We gathered in the usual desolate corner of a cemetery for our morning ritual of listening to music, talking and having a smoke before school. My friend knew I had been gifted a drum set that holiday and, after passing me a smoke, handed me an 8-track tape, smiled and said, "Check THIS drummer out!"

Just one look at the photo on the front of the cartridge left me spellbound. It was Rush's first live album, *All The World's A Stage*. Peart's chrome Slingerland kit glistened under the spotlights like a jewel in a king's crown. I immediately had to hear what this band sounded like. "Play it!" I urged. The opening chords of 'Bastille Day' poured from the speakers, and as soon as the drums and bass kicked in, my body was covered in goosebumps. I knew, in that moment, my life was changed.

I'm sure I confused my school teachers in the months and years that followed as I suddenly became interested in the French Revolution, Ayn Rand, English literature and Shakespeare. This is the impact a "rock drummer" had on my humble 16-year-old life. I bought that double live LP the very next day. So began a love affair with a band and a drummer that continues to this day.

Just as I remember so sharply the first time I heard Rush, so too will I always remember the moment when I was informed of Peart's death. I was out hiking and snowshoeing (one of my favourite pastimes, partially inspired by "Pratt"). I received a text from a close friend that just said "RIP Neil".

Like so many others, I was unaware of his battle with glioblastoma (a form of brain cancer), and the news left me in complete shock. In yet another testimony of the admiration the man generated, all who knew of his condition had kept their silence for more than two years out of respect for his privacy.

Peart often wrote in his books about ending a long day during his travels on his motorbike with a smoke and a sip of The Macallan... In his honour, then, prepare your favourite libation, and join *Rhythm* as we take a very special look at one of, if not *the*, most influential rock drummers of the modern era...

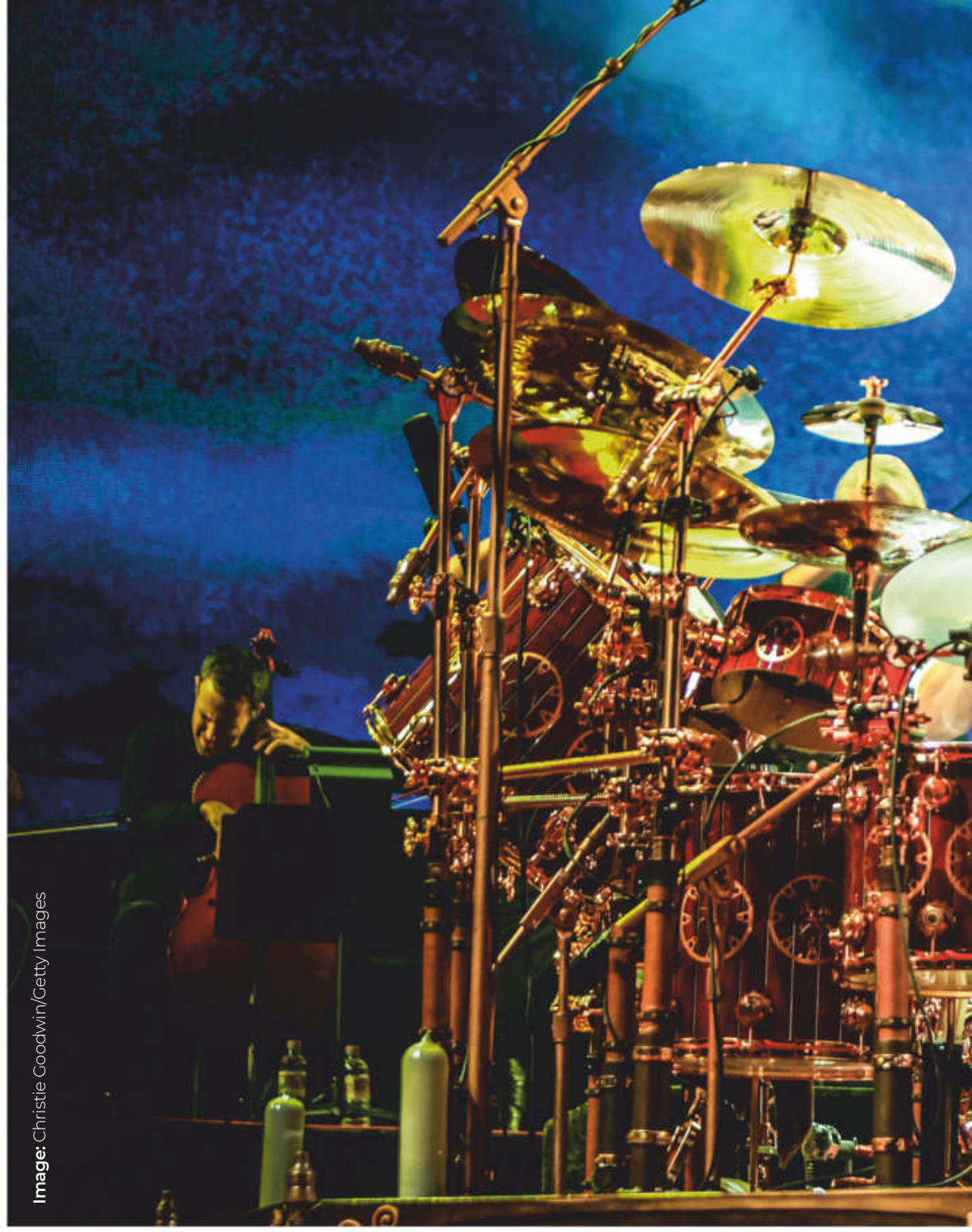


Image: Christie Goodwin/Getty Images

Image: Fin Costello/Getty Images

"RESPECT IS SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO EARN CONTINUALLY."

- RHYTHM MAGAZINE, AUGUST 2011

Image: Kevin Nixon/Getty Images

Image: Andrew Lepley/Getty Images

PEERS ON PEART

Tributes from fellow artists...

TIM 'HERB' ALEXANDER (Primus)

Image: Scott Dudelson/Getty Images

"I was walking to a friend's house in Riverview, Michigan when 'The Spirit Of Radio' came on the boom box I was carrying. It shook my world. Complex but listenable. Powerful and interesting. It's got to be the best intro into a song, ever... It made me feel connected to something that couldn't be explained, and it became my focus to learn how to play like Neil. I would learn every note of every album until I started to become my own player and not imitate Neil so much – which was hard to do by the way! He was a major influence on me.

"As a kid I couldn't describe what it was that had such a big impact – it just was! The thing that made the biggest impression on me was how Neil would have different parts within a song; it wasn't just a beat that continued throughout. He would make changes from verses to chorus and create introductions to songs – even 'Tom Sawyer', where the main groove during the verses has a part that is evolving as the verse moves on. And his solos were unique, because they were a song in themselves – and he kept those themes throughout his career as if it was an ongoing composition. His composition really affected how I think musically as a drummer, and I always try to have that approach in my playing.

"My favourite memories of Neil are watching him play every night on tour when we opened for them, especially when he would come to my dressing room to hang out and jam on my practice kit, or bang on an ice chest – whatever was there... Man, I'm still so sad."

RYAN VAN POEDEROOYEN (Devin Townsend Band/Imonolith)

"I was 14 years old when a buddy introduced me to Rush, and I remember hearing 'YYZ' and thinking, 'What the hell? This is incredible – listen to the drumming!' Neil was pushing boundaries, doing something completely different, and he made me feel that there was a whole new level to drumming.

"The biggest impact he had on me was how musical his playing was. He wasn't just keeping the beat and pulling off crazy drum fills; he thought out his cymbal parts to match the notes, or tones, of the music. It's why I have so many cymbals, and when people compliment me on my cymbal work, the reason is Neil Peart – you hear him come out in my playing. It's fine to borrow from your influences, but don't try to be them. They will always be the best versions of themselves. Be a first-rate version of yourself, not a second-rate version of someone else.

"Whenever Neil placed a fill, even in Rush's most progressive songs, it was perfect; and whether it was simple, or difficult, he was playing for the song. I have so many Rush tracks that are favourites for different reasons, but I always come back to 'YYZ'. You have your crazy fills and the 'proggy-ness', but there's this groove – almost like Neil's playing four on the floor. That song, encompasses everything that I think a drummer should know. It doesn't matter >>

“DRUMSET IS A LIFETIME OF EXPLORATION AND LEARNING AND CHALLENGE” - ANATOMY OF A DRUM SOLO VIDEO

A BRIEF HISTORY

Not much more can be told about Peart and Rush’s history that hasn’t already been written, but for the uninitiated, the band entered the music scene storming out of Toronto, Canada during the late ’60s with a direct rock-and-roll approach as a power trio. After getting noticed in the US, thanks to radio disc jockey Donna Halper, the band was on the verge of success when original drummer John Rutsey was advised not to tour due to health issues. Enter Neil Peart.

After a disappointing foray to London seeking his fame and fortune in the music industry, Peart returned home to St. Catharines, a suburb of Ontario, Canada. It was while working at his father’s International Harvester tractor parts store and playing in local bands in the St. Catharines area, that he received the fateful call to audition for Rush.

Neil’s addition not only elevated the band musically, but he became the principal lyricist simply by default. A lover of words and reading, Peart wilfully accepted the challenge. Although modest in his own evaluation of his work, his lyrics grew and progressed just like his drumming. Always one to embrace music technology and innovation, Peart adapted that aesthetic to his lyrics as well, writing about topics far removed from the typical banality of top 40 pop radio.

Rush eventually conquered the charts, however, and achieved considerable success in singles and album sales. This culminated in their recent induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame after many years of eligibility. Usually one to shy away from public events or spotlights, Peart commented in his acceptance speech, “We’ve been saying a long time, years, that this wasn’t a big deal. Turns out, it kind of is”.

Indeed, it was a very big deal for the millions of Rush fans around the world who so loved to share the object of their obsession with others. Rush being “indicted” as Peart put it, was solely for the fans. Neil also quoted Bob Dylan by adding, “The highest purpose of art is to inspire... What else can you do for anyone but inspire them?” In my personal life experience, Neil Peart is the truest embodiment of this statement.

WORDSMITH

In addition to Peart’s immeasurable impact in the music and drumming world, his other artistic contribution was his love of the written word. This was apparent through his command of language, whether writing or speaking

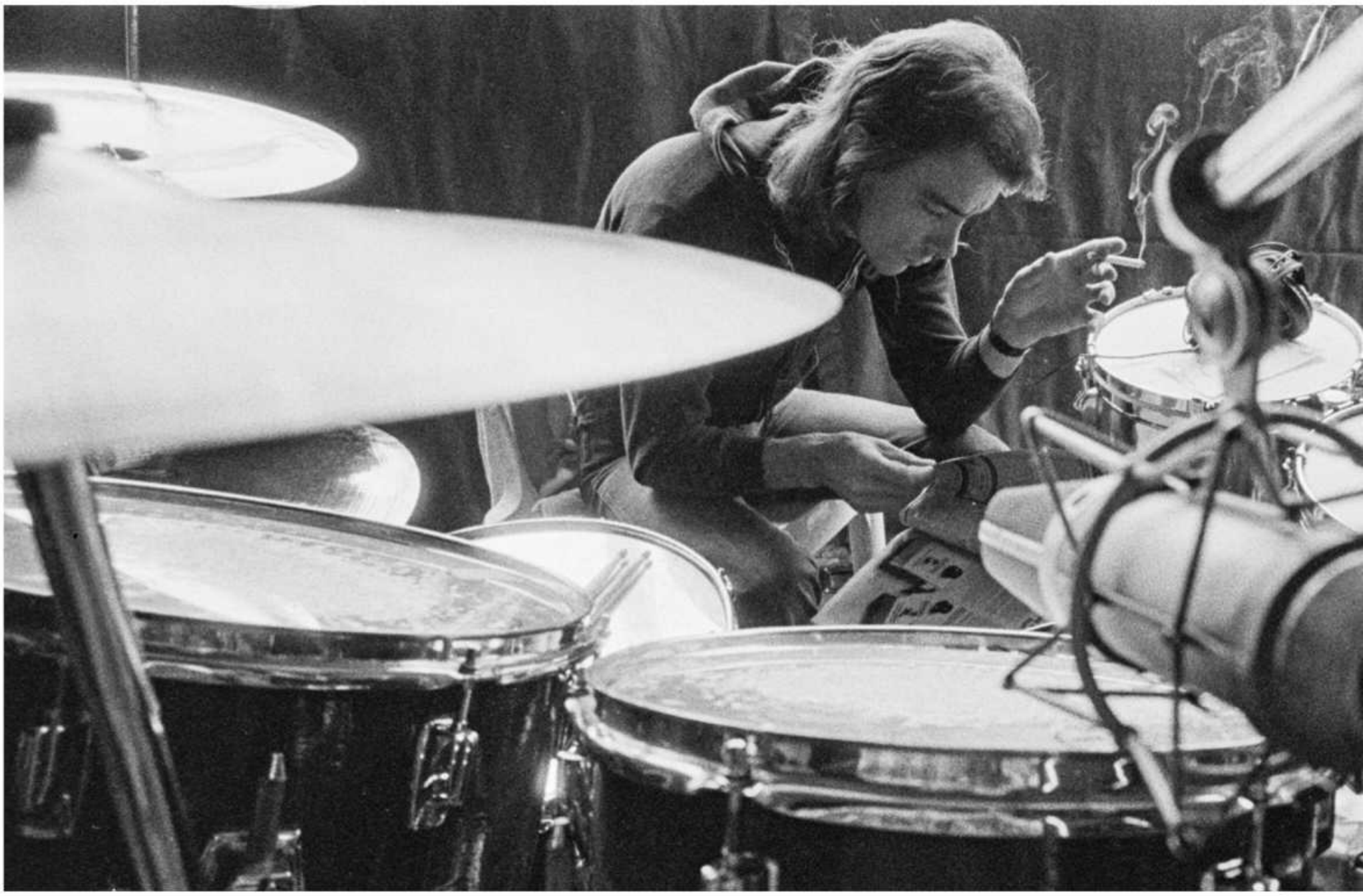


Image: Fin Costello/Getty Images

Image: Clayton Call/Getty Images

about an idea, be it in a song, interview or book. Peart always seemed to use the perfect word or phrase to convey his thoughts.

Many music lovers had difficulty getting past bassist and singer Geddy Lee's unique vocals. To some, he was a wailing banshee while others thought his original sound fit Rush perfectly. But even those who couldn't get past Lee's singing had to admit the proficiency of Peart's prose.

Peart had a way of making the most complex topic simple and shined a light on simple things that turned out to be complex. I always think of the song 'The Trees' off the *Hemispheres* release. In prose that Peart himself has shrugged off as simplistic, the song tells a story of equal rights achieved by drastic measures, wrapped in a progressive musical package. It is just one example of Peart's command of lyrical metaphor and allegory.

In addition to his talent as lyricist for the band, Peart also wrote several books. Most relate to his experiences travelling, either while touring or on his own. Neil was famous for either motorcycling or bicycling between gigs while on tour. One of his most poignant books is *Ghost Rider*, which chronicles his experience of suffering not one, but two fatal tragedies. The first involving the death of his daughter in an automobile accident, and the second, the death of his wife barely a year later. Neil ▷

PEERS ON PEART

Tributes from fellow artists...

>> what you're going to be playing, you should have a knowledge of time signatures. Then there's the flashiness, the progressiveness, the drum fills, the cymbal work – that's all in there, too, and he's laying it down with that fat groove.

"I went to see Rush on their *Roll The Bones* tour. We hadn't bought tickets but we managed to get some and ended up in the *front row*! Rush came on, and I was just blown away. There were a few times where Neil and I made eye contact, and he gave me a nod. I remember walking away from that show feeling totally inspired. I'm doing what I do today because of it. The biggest thing was making that eye contact. There was an energy that was *very* influential."

Image: Emma McIntyre/Getty Images

JON THEODORE (Queens Of The Stone Age)

"I can still remember being in the car on the way to school when 'Tom Sawyer' came on the radio. I was probably 10 years old, and I didn't know s**t, but when that monstrous groove came in over that deadly synth bass, it instantly resonated with me in a way I'd never known before. I knew in that moment that I was hearing something very special, and different, from all the other music I already knew. It was dangerous and heavy, like some kind of wild, sleek jungle cat on the prowl. By the time the 'A modern-day warrior' line hit, my mind was fully blown! It was one of those exhilarating moments when you experience a life-changing revelation.

"At that point, I wasn't even playing drums yet, but I knew that Neil was a different kind of drummer. I had already begun to focus on the drumming when I was listening to music – but when I listened to Rush, I couldn't stop the involuntary urge to air drum along with the beats and fills. Neil's playing was magic – compositional with the fearless creativity and thoughtful considerations of high art, but with the fierce heat and irreverent passion of rock 'n' roll. Such an elusive and rare blend.

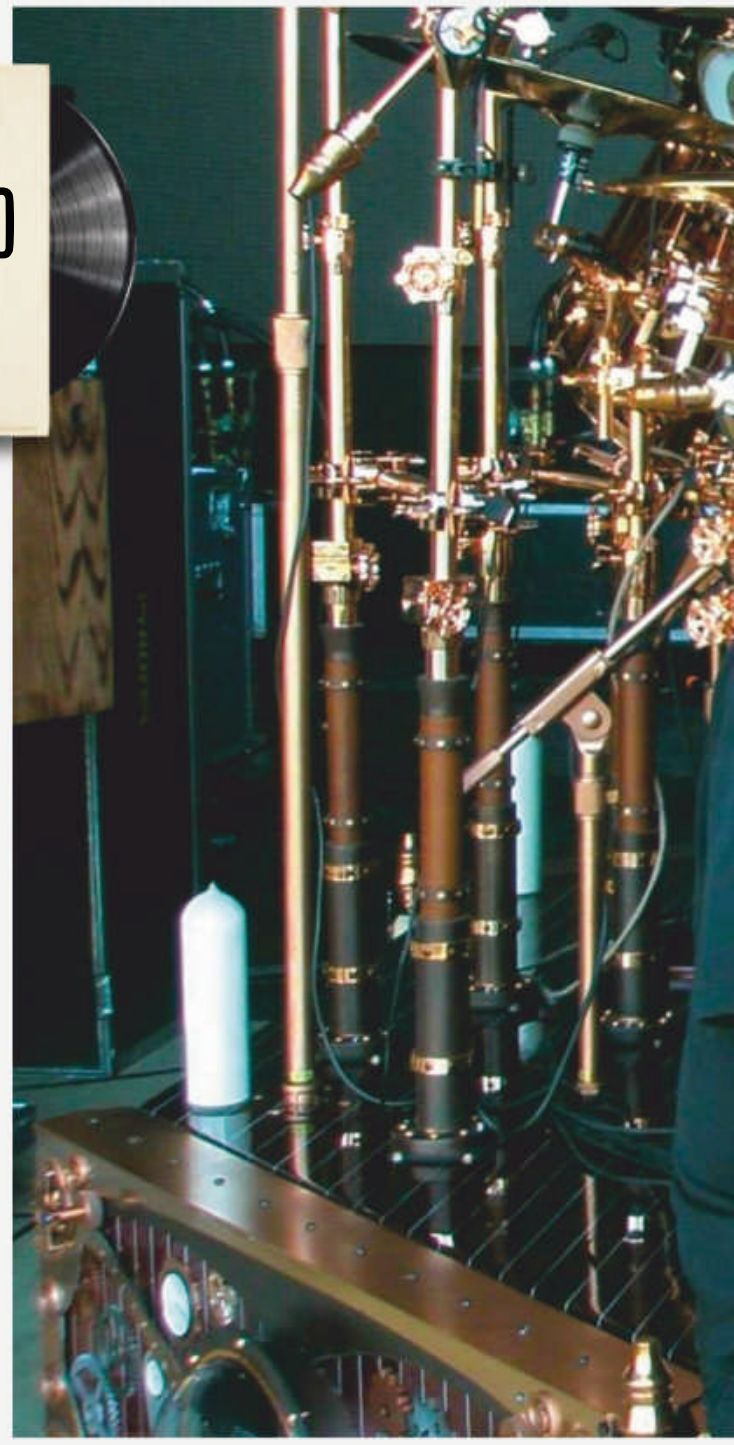
"There are so many different Rush tracks that are essential for so many different reasons, but if had to pick one, it would be 'La Villa Strangiato'. It's long, with *so* many moves – the whisper to roar dynamics of the intro, the quintessential Peart ride cymbal beat, the odd time groovy space dub, the chunky tom hits, the spotlight solo, the 'Cab Calloway' demented disco tom groove and the rest of the inimitable aspects of his playing. It's perfect.

"Rush's final show at The Forum in LA was a night to remember. Literally everyone I know who plays drums in LA was there, and it was an evening of the highest revelry and praise for our hero, Neil, and his band. There were more toasts, high fives, belly laughs, huge smiles, synchronised unison air drumming and slack-jawed stares of disbelief than you could imagine! The band was inspired, and Neil put on a three-hour clinic for his adopted hometown crowd, who responded with roars of appreciation. His solo that night was unforgettable; it had all the depth, precision and calculated wisdom we've come to love and expect from The Professor, but it also flowed and blossomed with organic improvisations. There was a beautiful snare scene in the beginning that resonated like Buddy Rich or Tony Williams, where he'd change patterns and sticking to make the accents >>

Essential Peart...

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Mike Portnoy shares his highlights from Neil Peart's drumming legacy



When I discovered Neil Peart and Rush in the early '80s, it was very much a case of the right band and the right drummer at the right time. It was exactly the type of challenging music I was looking for to help me grow and develop as a musician in my mid-teens. Neil became my number one hero. Nobody was applying themselves to a big kit in the same way that he was, and I was fascinated by his setup, his incredible time signatures and the feel of his patterns. He constructed his drum parts in such a musical way, and everything he played was so meticulously thought out and crafted.

"I'll never forget my first Rush concert: December 1982 on the *Signals* tour. It was so surreal to be in the same building as those guys, and I have never felt such respect when it was time for the drum solo – everyone was air drumming!

"My first personal meeting with Neil came through *Rhythm*, and I still get a tremendously fond feeling when I think about that day. I got to be the fan boy – it was my job to ask him about drums! – but after that we struck up a great friendship that lasted until he passed. I have so many great memories, but one that's very poignant is from our last meeting on the band's final tour. Neil invited me down to the show and soundcheck as he always did – he was so welcoming and gracious – and I got to take my son, Max. Max played his kit at soundcheck, and it was very special to share that last Rush show with him.

"Neil was always so modest; he never acted like the drum hero and legend that he was. In fact, he always talked about how he could be better! From the golden era of Rush, here are my personal highlights from Neil's incredible drumming legacy, and it's these tracks and albums that helped make me the drummer I am today..."

***Fly By Night* (1975)**

"The band's second album, but Neil's first with them. There is so much great drumming on here, but for me, the standout track is the epic 'By-Tor And The Snow Dog'. It's one of the first Rush songs that I learned to play, and the drumming is so challenging... I particularly love the middle section with the mini drum solos and the really cool, progressive pattern, where every bar takes away one beat. That creative, and very clever, nature of playing with numbers and patterns really appealed to me."

***Caress Of Steel* (1975)**

"Probably one of the most underrated albums in their catalogue, but it features Neil's first recorded drum solo in the sub-section of 'The Fountain Of Lamneth: II. Didacts And Narpets'. It includes so many of the styles that would become staples of his live solos and was an incredibly important moment for him as a drummer."

***2112* (1976)**

"The breakthrough album for the band and a masterclass in Neil's drumming – especially the first two passages, 'Overture' and 'The Temples Of Syrinx'. You are not considered worthy if you can't air drum 'Overture'! Right to the end it was a key part of their live show, and that big opening tom fill at the start of 'The Temples Of Syrinx' is typical, and classic, Neil. 'A Passage To Bangkok' is also great. This was the start of their true prog era, and the next five albums that followed are my absolute favourites..."

***A Farewell To Kings* (1977)**

"One of the all-time Rush greats, and an album that took drumming to a whole new level. 'Xanadu' and 'Cygnus X-1: Book One: The Voyage' are pure perfection and true prog classics. 'Xanadu' is quite possibly one of their best songs, and 'Cygnus X-1' gives a real sign of what was to come, as this track pretty much expands to an entire sequel on the band's next album."

***Hemispheres* (1978)**

"Rush's progressive peak, and my personal benchmark in terms of virtuosity, musicianship and how far you can take it... I spoke in depth about 'La Villa Strangiato' in *Rhythm* last year (*Tracks That Inspired A Generation*, Issue 293), but the whole album is an exercise in pure indulgence (as they called it). 'The Trees' – my goodness, the drumming on that is just ridiculous. Masterful and musical, and the odd time signatures in 5s and 7s are an education in phrasing. There is so much there..."

***Permanent Waves* (1980)**

"Just when you thought that they had peaked, along comes *Permanent Waves* to usher in a new decade for the band, and it's the perfect mesh of prog and sensibility. If I had to pick a favourite Rush album, this would be it. There are only six songs, and I look at them as three different animals. 'The Spirit Of Radio' and 'Freewill' are the radio tracks,

Image: courtesy of Mike Portnoy

"TO CRAFT EVERY NUANCE OF THOSE GROOVES, BEATS AND DEVELOPMENT... HE REALLY DID HAVE THE MIND OF A PROFESSOR."

and they got lots of airplay, but that didn't mean that the musicality was turned down. Rush did as much in five minutes on each of those songs as most bands would do in 20! They are drumming masterworks, but are also easily digestible.

"The understated 'Entre Nous' and 'Different Strings', are equally great, and then you have the two heavy-hitters that close each side of the record – 'Jacob's Ladder' and 'Natural Science'. The composition of these is epic and showcases some of the greatest drumming of Neil's career. I have covered dozens of Rush tracks over the years, but 'Jacob's Ladder' was one of the hardest. That middle section that alternates between 6 and 7 is so masterfully crafted, and the way that Neil develops the part and jams within it is just incredible. To craft every nuance of those grooves, beats and development shows such discipline; he really did have the mind of a professor."

***Moving Pictures* (1981)**

"Their most popular album, an undeniable masterpiece from start to finish, and the record that changed everything and turned Rush into a fully fledged arena band. Side one is complete perfection, and somehow it also translated to the mainstream, because 'Tom Sawyer', 'Limelight' and 'Red Barchetta' all became radio staples, while 'YYZ' became the band's most famous instrumental.

"On side two, 'The Camera Eye' is one of my favourites of their more epic songs, 'Witch Hunt' is so dark and 'Vital Signs' is incredibly forward thinking – with the reggae influence that The Police were introducing around that time. It was to go on and become something bigger on the next album, but here it was ushering in a new era..."

***Signals* (1982)**

"The height of my fan-boy fanaticism, the first tour that I saw them on and *that* red Tama drum kit that I reproduced for my Rush tribute years later! Here, they brought in more keyboards, and the songs became shorter and a bit more traditional in their arrangement. Neil's playing in 'Subdivisions' and the way he is grooving and phrasing in 7 is mind blowing. The highlights for me are 'The Analog Kid' and 'Digital Man'. Even though I went in different musical directions after *Signals*, there are moments on every subsequent album that I love, right up to *Clockwork Angels*.

"As a band, and as individual musicians, Neil, Geddy and Alex were always developing, growing and embracing new influences and challenges. And, as a drummer, Neil was never content to stay in the same place – introducing electronics, new setups and sounds, scaling down to a single kit, relearning his whole approach with Freddie Gruber, playing swing and big band... He was, and always will be, a constant source of inspiration.

"RIP, Professor."

Image: Fin Costello/Getty Images

was famously private throughout his life, but if you wish to know him, you merely have to read his words.

INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATION

Listening to Peart's static fills, one can hear Keith Moon's influence. Never one to just play a roll and crash on the '1', Peart was constantly peppering his fills with off-beat accents and unusual sound source choices. Cowbells, China and splash cymbals, wood blocks and timbales were just a few of the colours that Peart chose to paint with from his palette. Just as Moonie's choppy, seemingly chaotic, fills worked for The Who, Peart's personal style meshed seamlessly with the musical direction the other members of Rush were headed.

Image: Christie Goodwin/Getty mages

MEMORIES OF NEIL...

Rob Wallis (Founder, Hudson Music)

Image: Hudson Music

"What was it like to work with Neil Peart? Well, the best answer I can give is that 1 + 1 = 3! Neil referred to us as 'collaborators', and every project we worked on always morphed into so much more than we could ever have imagined at the start. A great example is the final one we did together – *Taking Center Stage: A Lifetime of Performance* – where we ended up with a three-part DVD, over eight hours in length!

"Our first adventure together, after getting to know Neil when we filmed a Buddy Rich tribute concert in NYC – Neil's first live foray outside of Rush – was the *Burning For Buddy* sessions that Neil produced for Atlantic Records. For 14 days straight we filmed the world's top drummers, and that brought us much closer with him. Eventually, we wore him down, and he said yes to doing his first instructional video – *A Work in Progress* – filmed in beautiful Woodstock, New York. We soon learned that an enticement for Neil was the locations we chose for filming, so we'd always allow him to make the final decision on any location. Neil would then match it up with travel plans that he would look forward to, either by car – he once had his limited-edition Z8 BMW shipped to my house outside NYC from the West Coast – or by motorcycle, driving from Woodstock to his home in Canada on his trusted red BMW. Just like the planning of a Rush tour, it all worked around Neil and his wish to see the most scenic parts of the country.

"I learned early on that Neil liked to have a hand in every aspect of a project. And he was *always* right – a perfect partner. He treated each production with the same care he treated his writing and his drum parts for Rush; everything had a place and a sound reason. Seeing our products on display at the merchandise stands at Rush concerts was something I'll never forget.

"Of course, all of his speaking on camera was equally perfect; I can barely remember a second take for any speaking and, for that matter, any drumming – of which we recorded hours! Everything he said was thought out and clear, all the way down to the detailed orchestrations on the drums on songs like 'Subdivisions', 'Caravan', 'YYZ' and many others.

"During the course of working with Neil for over 30 years, very little was off limits – except his private life. Neil was immensely private, and I feel very privileged to have been allowed into a small corner of his world."

Watch and hear from Neil Peart at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Another percussionist in a power trio that preceded them and who Peart looked up to was Ginger Baker. Just as Baker brought his jazz sensibility to Cream's rock idiom, so Peart brought his progressive leanings to Rush, pushing them to another musical level.

On the other end of Neil's influences were more disciplined drummers that emerged from the British progressive rock scene: Carl Palmer (Emerson, Lake and Palmer), Bill Bruford (Yes, King Crimson) and Michael Giles (original King Crimson drummer) all had an effect on Peart. But the influences didn't stop in his formative years. Both Peart and Rush are famous for continuing to be influenced by other styles of music. A great example of this is Peart's respect for Stewart Copeland from The Police.

At a time when there was a lot of peer pressure in my personal music choices, Peart validated my opinion of Copeland and The Police by praising him publicly in interviews. Rush's *Signals* and *Grace Under Pressure* both showed The Police's influence on their music.

Another example was his fascination with Buddy Rich, big band and jazz music. As drummers, most of us have heard the name Buddy Rich and are familiar with the musical legacy that goes along with him. As I made my way along my own musical path, Rich and his playing were a constant reminder of how far you could take drumming – and how far I had to go. I understood why everyone praised Buddy; he set a level of musicianship and excellence that was inspiring and hard to surpass.

Just as Rich inspired generations before me, Rush became my inspiration and Neil became my 'Buddy' – an interesting anecdote because Peart himself fell under Buddy's spell. Peart never considered Rich a big influence on his playing until a chain of circumstances (as The Professor liked to say) changed all of that.

In 1992, Cathy Rich, Buddy's daughter, invited Neil to perform at the Buddy Rich Memorial Concert. Peart dove passionately into the deep end, researching and rehearsing Rich's ▷

PEERS ON PEART

Tributes from fellow artists...

>> pop, or float – like the sound of a waterfall – that was so loose, free, inspired and *musical* that it took my breath away. From there, he took us on a journey through all the different aspects of his playing. It was a beautiful sight, and sound, and he was holding court and laying out for all to see the treasures collected from a lifetime of tireless crusading for inspiration and the relentless pushing of himself to evolve and keep learning. It was magnificent, and the fact that it was rumoured to be Rush's last show made it even more poignant.

"Having Neil acknowledge what I said about his playing that night is one of the proudest moments in my life, and to know that it meant something to him because I had 'got it' is something I will always treasure. As a fellow human and drummer dedicating my life to the pursuit of people 'getting it', I can't think of any more meaningful a validation than to have the blessing of The Professor. Forever one of my first and biggest inspirations, a trailblazing maverick who lit the path and showed us all what is up and how high the bar can be set. Long live Neil, and long live Rush."

Image: Daniel Knighton/Getty Images

MARCO MINNEMANN

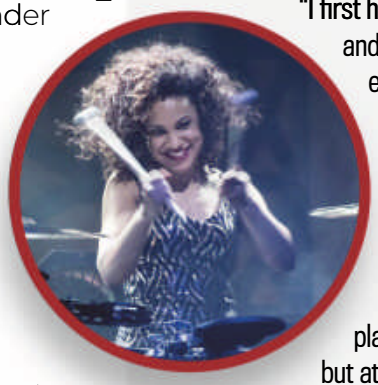
"The first time I heard Rush was when I was about 16 years old, and a bandmate had the idea to cover 'Tom Sawyer'. I immediately thought it was very cool, and I transcribed the drum part. It made me instantly recognise how organised Neil's playing was. He had these great, very musical ideas; his drum parts were composed and his fills became trademarks. It's mind blowing and beautiful to see so many people in the audience at a Rush show air drumming to his fills. You don't get that often, right?

"Neil was a very thoughtful writer and player, and both reflected his personality. I think what drummers can take from that is to be more of a composer on the drums than an improviser. Both sides have their values and places, but Neil showed the world that drum parts matter and can become a hook. And let's not forget about how great a lyricist he was.

"When I listened to Neil's playing, the discipline and obeying the grooves and structure in such a powerful way was something that definitely opened my eyes. When I met him, we discussed how both of us had moved to California at the same time from different countries. It was a very nice talk about life, friends and experience.

"For me, 'Tom Sawyer' still shows all the trademarks of Neil's playing: the force, the focus, the structure, the composition and the style."

Image: Connor Kerr



CHERISSE OSEI (Simple Minds)

"I first heard Rush when I was a teenager, and I remember being immediately excited and intrigued by what I was listening to – and thinking how appropriate their band name was. Their music definitely gave me an adrenaline rush and has done ever since!

"I was fascinated by Peart's playing. I loved how complex it was, but at the same time so musical. I loved the parts he came up with – you could >>

Image: Fin Costello/Getty Images

material to perform with the big band during the concert. Growing up, I was constantly told that jazz drummers were the "best" drummers and could play anything. While there may be an element of truth to this opinion, it was inspiring to me that my favourite drummer, who was considered a "rock" musician, played masterfully with Rich's big band. In yet another example of his influence on me personally, Neil's participation in the event inspired me to dig deeper into drumming history, and in so doing I gained a deeper appreciation of Buddy Rich and those that came before him.

Peart's experience with the concert also led to his involvement with two *Burning For Buddy* album releases, featuring a who's who of the drumming world playing arrangements of a variety of songs as well as Rich's big band tunes.

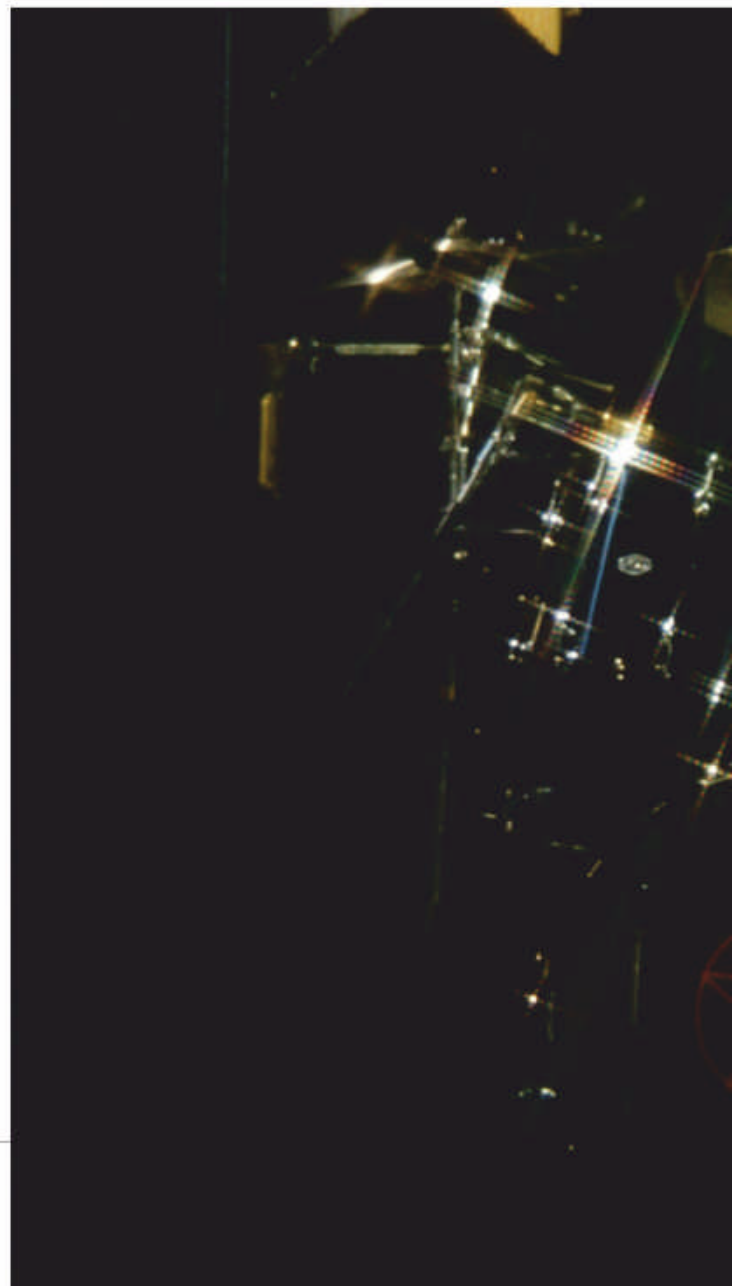
It's impressive that Peart managed to take all of those influences and homogenise them into his own personal sound. Even when he was years past his impressionable influential stage, Peart was still soaking up knowledge like a sponge.

FROM ANALOG KID TO DIGITAL MAN

As a result of his experience with the Buddy Rich Memorial Concert and subsequent *Burning For Buddy* CDs, Peart reassessed his playing style and began to study with drum guru Freddie Gruber. After reaching the pinnacle of peer acceptance, winning awards and being voted top in many polls of various drumming and music magazines, Peart felt a need to reinvent himself. At a time when many would rest on their laurels, Peart was continuing to learn and challenge himself.

This process is wonderfully documented in the highly recommended video *A Work In Progress*. In it, Peart describes his journey of rediscovery as only he so eloquently can. In addition, he demonstrates the real-world application of his studies by showing how they applied to Rush's release at the time, *Test For Echo*. He altered his drum kit setup (always guaranteed to awe and inspire gear geeks) and went ergonomic like other Gruber disciples (Steve Smith, Dave Weckl and Peter Erskine).

Peart changed, but remained the same. 'Circumstances', anyone? He started



to "dance" on the drums, as he often described Gruber's instruction. Peart's playing became more rounded and his groove even more pronounced. When I saw Rush and Peart on the *Test For Echo* tour, I marvelled at the fluidity of his playing. It showed me that by selfishly pursuing his personal reinvention, the fans' reward was as satisfying to them as listeners as it was to Peart's sense of his own musicianship.

An excellent example of Neil's willingness to change was his relationship with electronic drums, triggers and samples. Originally a sceptic and not entirely trusting of the new technology, Peart changed his opinion. Throughout the '80s he experimented with electronics that included a secondary kit behind his main acoustic one, blending both worlds.

Peart's massive acoustic kit had inspired countless drummers throughout his career; now he was consolidating, morphing and making the most efficient use of the technology he had at his disposal. Peart was able to pack most of his percussion into his electronic setup by sampling his personal instruments and using the sounds with his Simmons pads throughout the '80s, and then with his Roland electronic kit during their later live years. True, in later years they used some sequences live, but always tastefully and musically.

Another testimony to Peart's precision was his ability to play with those sequences or a click live, yet push and pull the band to keep the live feel. While always serious and precise, Peart's playing never sounded mechanical or cold. There was always a human touch.

His physicality was also very apparent in his visual style of playing. Musically progressive, yet unflinchingly aggressive. Stick spinning and twirling didn't overshadow the fact that every note had a purpose. When Rush came roaring back from their hiatus with *Vapor Trails*, Peart once again caught our ear with his blazing double bass intro with trademark two surface ride pattern on 'One Little Victory'. It was unusual, as Peart never used his twin kicks for rhythms, only fills, and yet was one more example of Neil exploring his own style and willingness to do something different and outside the box.

THE LIVE ELEMENT

If you have ever experienced Rush and Peart live, you know you could always ▷

"AT A TIME WHEN MANY WOULD REST ON THEIR LAURELS, PEART WAS CONTINUING TO LEARN..."

Image: Pete Still/Getty Images

PEERS ON PEART

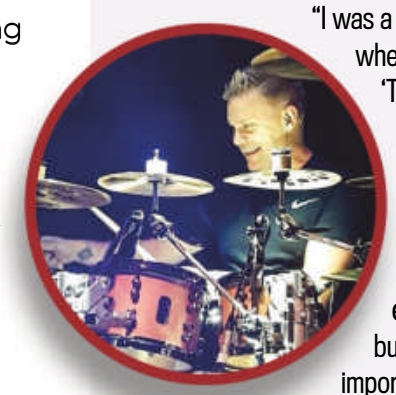
Tributes from fellow artists...

>> feel he was always pushing boundaries – and he made me want to explore more complex fills and work on my own technique and groove. He was one of the first drummers to play such difficult drum parts in mainstream rock music, and I also wanted to emulate his energy and precision.

"My favourite memory would have to be watching the live *Exit... Stage Left* DVD for the first time and being blown away by Peart's drumming. I was just mesmerised, and when the DVD finished, I felt so inspired that I went and played on my drums for four hours solid!

"For me, the must Rush track has to be 'Limelight'. It's a classic rock masterpiece, and I love the guitar riffs and the lyrics, which highlight Peart's feelings about being in the limelight and the difficulty he had with coming to grips with fame. I love the way Geddy Lee's voice sounds and the way Peart's powerful drumming drives the track forward."

CRAIG BLUNDELL (Steven Wilson, Steve Hackett)



"I was a spotty kid in a record store when I first heard Neil play on 'The Spirit Of Radio', and I remember it like it was yesterday – the moment that Neil starts that ride pattern, just as it all kicks in... I have had many eureka moments in my life, but that was one of the most important. I didn't know what he was doing, but I loved it, and even though I didn't read music, I wore that tape out learning to play it, going backward and forwards trying to work out what the hell was going on! To this day, it's still my favourite sticking pattern, and it doesn't just belong in the prog genre. It's forward-thinking drumming at its very best and works across so many platforms.

"And that's the thing with Neil, he was such a pioneer in going forward... Everything was, and still is, ahead of its time, and it's stood the test of time. He was never content to sit still; he was always pushing forward to make the next thing better than the last, and that work ethic of not resting on your laurels has been a tremendous inspiration to me over the years.

"Neil chose when to blaze, but, equally, when he put less notes in it would be just as beautiful. He was the king of that, and it's an important lesson for young drummers who think they will find the answers in more notes. He always played for the song and was tremendously musical and intricate. There are few drummers who are instantly recognisable when you put on a record, but Neil is one of them, and I always go back to him when I need a burst of inspiration. For me, he is the epitome of musicality and determination.

"Sadly, I never did get to see Rush live, or meet Neil in person – two of my biggest regrets – but I am so proud to have played on the band's 40th anniversary album *2112 – 40th* with Steven Wilson. We covered 'The Twilight Zone', and I was so nervous. We rearranged it completely, because I thought I would be assassinated if I tried to do the same as Neil! It's an experience that I will cherish forever, and simply to know that he listened to my drums puts a smile on my face." >>

expect them to play their material exactly like the record. However, there were times where they would deviate from the script. They were famous for their instrumentals, medleys and the centrepiece: Peart's drum solo. If you did not get the opportunity to see Rush live, fret not. There is a wealth of live recordings that chronicle every phase of Rush and Peart's live evolution.

Neil elevated the drum solo from a mere display of chops to an orchestrated presentation, documented over the course of their live releases. His personal approach to soloing is captured in the *Taking Center Stage* video. In it, Peart again succinctly vocalises his thoughts towards his drum solos – another highly recommended treasure that gives insight into Neil's original approach to his craft.

In the March 2014 issue of *Rhythm*, Peart wrote on soloing, "I believe most humans can be stirred to their cores by rhythmic drum patterns – it is surely the oldest music. If a drummer can combine that primal instinct with structure, conversation, invention and a touch of theatre, the audience will be reached, even moved".

With a catalogue as vast as theirs, Peart often remarked on how difficult it was creating set lists for live shows. One creative way of squeezing in a little more material into a show was mashing up songs. Their creative technique of doing this can be found throughout Rush's live history, going all the way back to their first live album, *All The World's A Stage*, with their combining of 'Fly By Night' and 'In The Mood'.

When I saw them on the *Presto* tour, they segued out of 'Freewill' into 'Distant Early Warning' with seamless precision.

Image: Ebet Roberts/Getty Images

MEMORIES OF NEIL...

Rhythm subscriber, Giles Henshaw

"For me, like thousands of other drummers around the world, Neil was a huge influence. His intelligence, technique and musicality continue to inspire and he is very sadly missed.

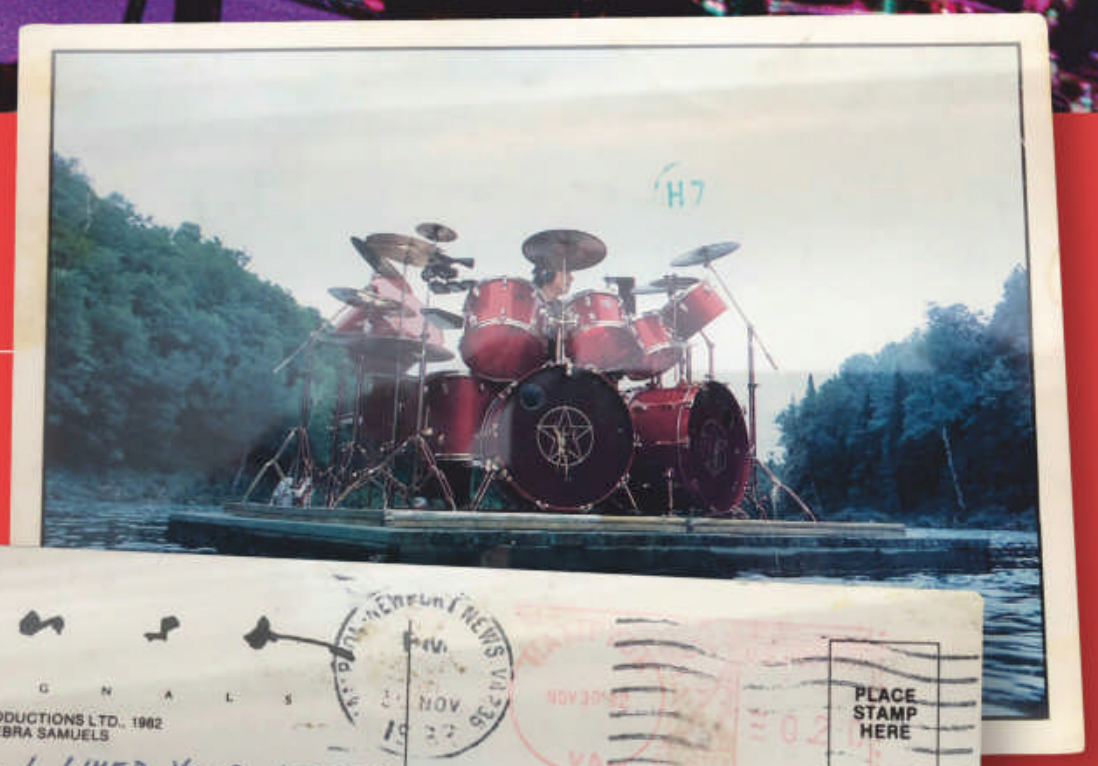
"As a spotty, young drummer in the '80s, I wrote to Neil – via *Modern Drummer* magazine – asking him about the Rush track 'La Villa Strangiato' and how to play it. Not expecting a reply from my drumming hero, I resigned myself to practicing the track without guidance, getting it wrong every time!

"Fast forward six months and, totally unexpectedly, one cold October morning what should drop through the post box than a handwritten postcard from The Professor himself!

"It was one of the many personalised cards that he used to send out to fans during the early '80s, until it took up too much of his time and he had to stop.

"Needless to say, I was thrilled, stunned and amazed that *he* would take the time to write a response to a kid fan in the UK.

"It remains to this day my most-prized drumming possession – it sits in a frame in my drum room – and is a lovely example of the humility of a truly inspirational drumming figure."



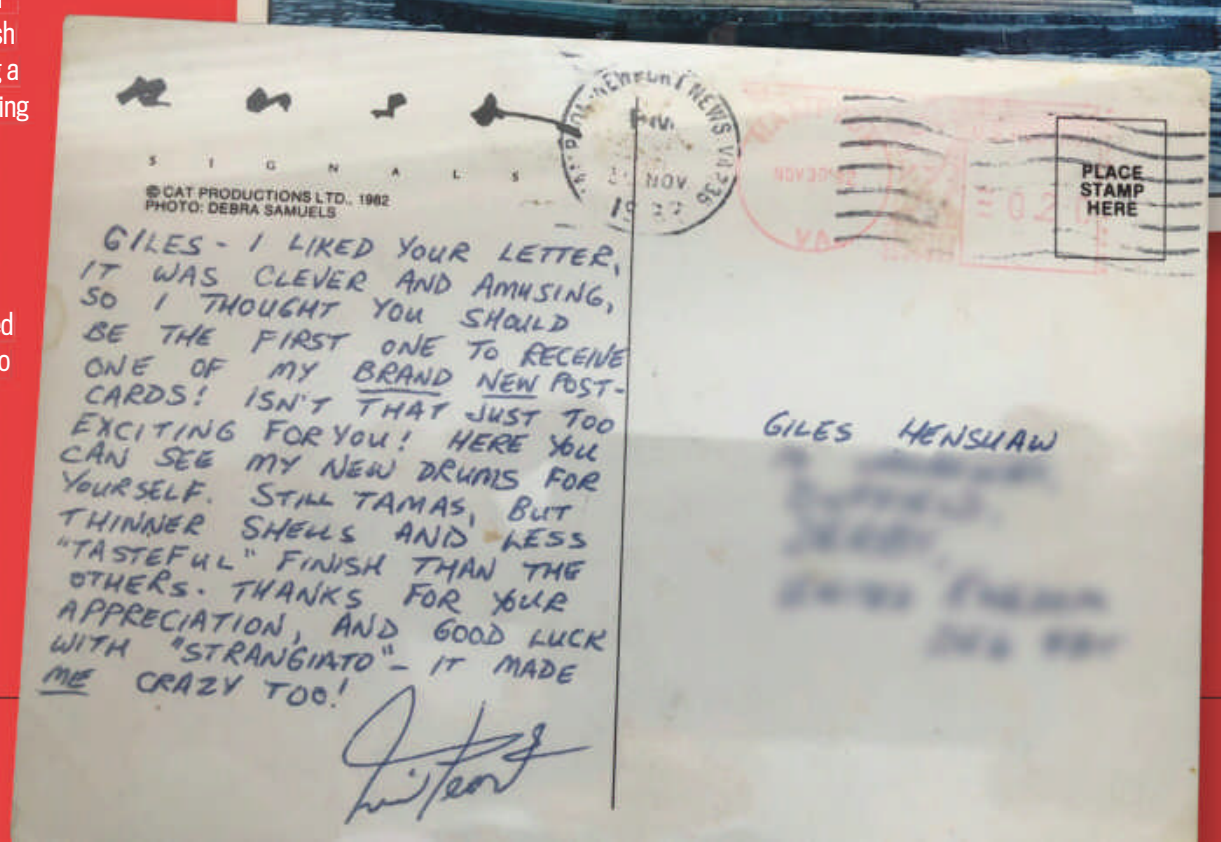


Image: Fin Costello/Getty Images

Later, on the *Counterparts* tour, they surprised everyone when they went from a blazing performance of 'Xanadu' into the fan-favourite instrumental 'Cygnus X-1 Book II: Hemispheres Part I: Prelude'. This was the kind of band Rush was, always eager to please fans by playing as much material as possible, but still satisfying their own creative urges.

Rush and Peart set a standard for their album-like perfection in concert in an era when bands were notorious for going all out in the studio, then having problems replicating it live. After listening to Rush's first live album for so long, my young ears were surprised when I dug back into their catalogue and heard studio versions of the songs that I had grown so familiar with from that first live album. It was truly ear opening to hear how Rush changed the arrangements slightly on some songs, kept others exact and left room in others for improv and risk taking. Here were three men pushing their studio capability to the limits yet still pulling it off live.

Rush and Peart's ability to morph and change yet still remain the same is a definitive example of a "progressive" band. They always used technology to their advantage. They had no shortcomings musically, so they didn't need to hide behind it. Every note laid down in the studio was replicated live.

Rush toured relentlessly, playing anywhere and everywhere with anybody ▷

PEERS ON PEART

Tributes from fellow artists...

RYAN BROWN (DWEEZIL ZAPPA)

Image: Seth Jacobson

"The first time I heard Rush was on June 22, 1990 on the *Presto* tour, at Fiddler's Green Amphitheatre in Greenwood Village, Colorado. I was 14 years old, and it was a truly magical experience. I was mesmerised from the first note to the last, and I bought a T-shirt, poster and tour book! Everything about the show – the performances, the songs, the lights – it was the greatest thing I had ever seen or heard...

"It took me a while to figure it out, but the song that was stuck in my head for the walk home was 'Red Barchetta'. I was blown away by how creative and intricate Neil's parts were. His drumming was unlike anything I had heard, and Rush became the new benchmark for me. I thought if I could learn how to play along with those albums, I could probably play anything! It was like unlocking the ultimate challenge for our craft. I didn't realise at first that some of the songs were in odd time signatures, or that they were changing time signatures. I didn't know that was possible yet, I just learned the songs. Then, my drum teacher, Dave Robnett, taught me how to count them out. Looking back now, I feel like it was the perfect way to get into odd time music.

"Neil's influence made me want to make my drum parts more interesting, for myself and for the listener. I wanted to be as consistent as possible, and I wanted to hit hard!

"I was lucky enough to see Rush live 24 times, and while each show was absolutely incredible, there was something extra special about the show on the *Snakes And Arrows* tour on July 25, 2007 at Irvine Meadows, California. Neil, Alex and Geddy were all especially on fire that night, and I remember thinking during the show that it was the best performance I had ever witnessed. I tried extra hard just to soak it all up...

"For me, 'YYZ' has many of the classic Rush elements all in one song. There's the famous morse code intro. The main riff is in 5/4, but it changes time signatures and has the classic Neil ride cymbal groove along with trading bass and drum solos."

PETER ERSKINE (Weather Report, Steps Ahead, Solo Artist)

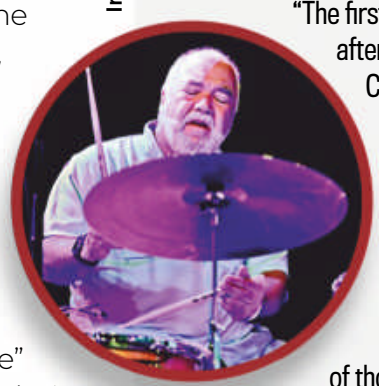


Image: Peter Van Breukelen

"The first time I experienced Rush was after Neil had given me one of their CDs. Prior to our meeting, I had only heard about the band. As much as I tried to listen to everything when I was younger, my taste became more focused as I grew older. Needless to say, I was impressed.

"Neil put an extraordinary amount of thought and work into his drumming. The intricate complexities of that band's music, combined with his powerful execution of the drum parts, made as deep an impression upon the minds and spirits of music fans everywhere as Gene Krupa's drumming had done decades earlier. My takeaway was that Neil was the Krupa of our time. I can have great admiration for a set of skills >>

and everybody. One of the more unusual times I saw Rush live was on their *Farewell To Kings* tour. They had not yet reached headline status and were opening for American rocker Bob Seger and The Silver Bullet Band. Most of the attendees were there for Seger, but by the end of Rush's energetic 45-minute set, the trio from Canada had won the crowd over.

Every time I saw Peart and Rush live, they played with that same passion. Rush was all about the music. No tales of debauchery or excess. No egos or infighting. The focus was entirely on the songs and the performance of them. They set a selfish artistic goal for themselves, which the fans benefited from.

Rush and Peart were known for their musical precision in concert. The closest thing to a mistake that I ever witnessed was on the *Presto* tour. They played 'The Pass', which has a very stark intro by Geddy Lee on bass with Peart echoing his riffs with a tribal tom-tom beat, and ethereal

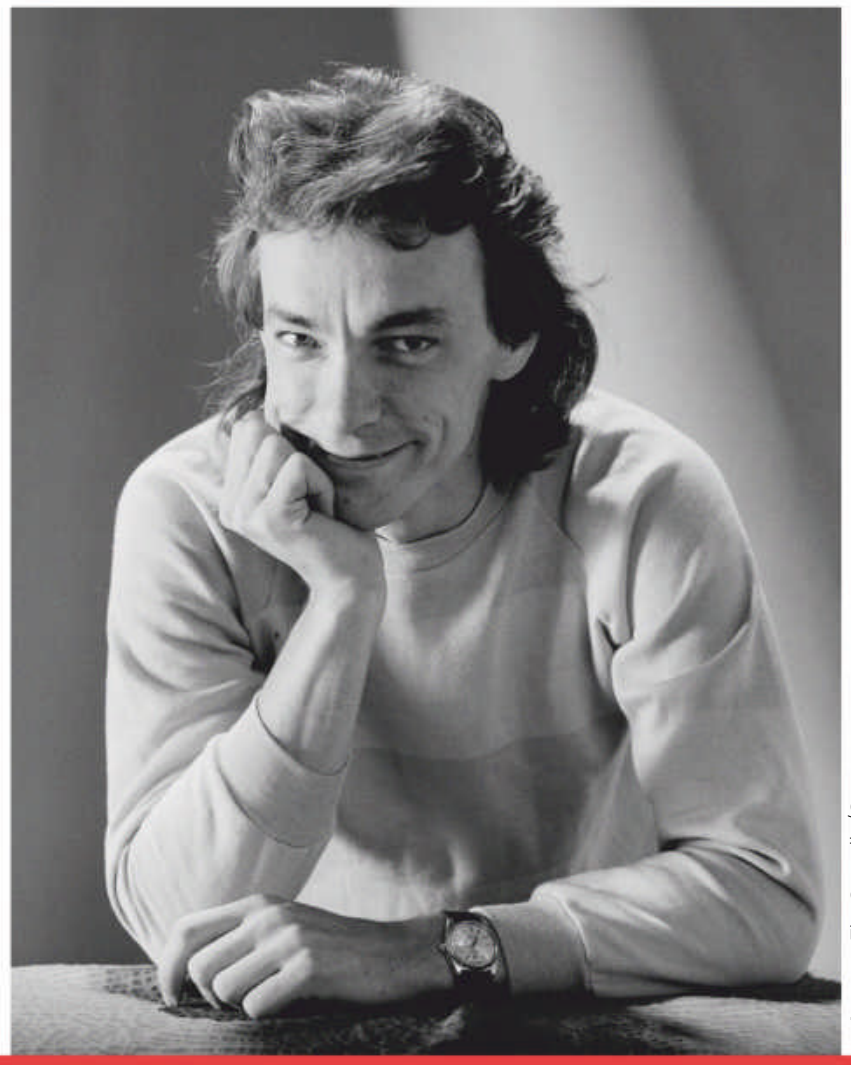


Image: Fin Costello/Getty mages

MEMORIES OF NEIL...

Beyond the Engine Room (Doane Perry, Jethro Tull)

Image: courtesy of Doane Perry

"Neil and I may have first met because we both had the same 'day job' description – playing challenging music with our respective bands – but we connected in a way that went considerably beyond the wood and metal.

"Both of us loved the subtle and powerful art of language, and we would often write each other long, tall tales from the road. There was a mutual understanding about the challenges of touring and the cerebral, athletic and musical requirements of our respective gigs. When we got off the road, we would have these long, luxurious lunches, talking broadly across multiple topics and everything time would allow: literature, science, history, philosophy, astronomy, nature, exotic cars, obscure musical influences, the state of the world and the state of us *in* it. Generally, we would bypass the small talk and jump straight into these wonderfully labyrinthian conversations, sometimes finishing each other's sentences as we went along. Perhaps one of the reasons we connected in such a profound way was due to our shared interests outside of music, which informed what we both did *inside* music, even if they were only tangentially connected. Oddly enough, the common ground that originally brought us together rarely drifted into technical talk about drums. Never deliberate... it just didn't come up that much. There were always big notions to explore!

"Whether it was through music, lyric or prose writing, Neil was an exceptional, imaginative and exacting architect of language and rhythm. However, I don't think that artistic part of his being would have unfolded in quite the same way if it hadn't been for the deep humanitarian instincts that were always alive in him. That empathy and sensitivity was clearly present in his writing and, of course, in his playing with Rush, as well as every other artist with whom he worked. Those personal and artistic identities were inextricably linked, and I believe it's why he was able to connect with people so powerfully and directly. His natural gift of being able to put himself out there, without pretence, in such a revealing way, allowed people to really feel like they knew him. It was an honest reflection of who he was... and he never sidestepped the painful moments in his life, as he could so easily have done.

"People sometimes made the mistake of thinking that because Neil had such an extroverted personality on stage, that he was the same way off stage. He wasn't... he was actually somewhat shy, but underneath that stoic shyness (which was a mixture of modesty, humility, self effacement, unapologetic honesty and near-military punctuality), was his constant desire to get better and to communicate more clearly. Even though there was much he kept in reserve, I feel it was also important to him that he felt clearly understood. Later, when he wasn't talking as much, he still remained deeply engaged with his family and friends. It wasn't always verbal, and even in those rare and hard to imagine quiet but comfortable moments between us, there was much that *was* communicated... and I know that was the same for others in his life.

"By default, he lived in the deep end of the pool. One afternoon, a small remark he made provided an illustrative insight to the rich interior landscape that he inhabited. I had given him a thick book by brilliant naturalist author Allan Schoenherr entitled *A Natural History of California*. He turned to me and said,"You know, Doane, *this* is where I live". It remained a permanent fixture on his coffee table. Although he never subscribed to any organised religion and had difficulty aligning with such a concept, he clearly belonged to the church of the natural world. I believe it was here, quietly communing in nature, where he was spiritually most alive and at ease.

"There are many valid perspectives here, as Neil knew and deeply touched countless people, some in overlapping circles and others in circles that barely crossed. Nonetheless, all of us who knew him could honestly say that we were extraordinarily fortunate to have shared the same time and space with him. And in that sense, I think he also belonged in part to everyone who loved and admired him, from up close or at a distance. I know he was deeply appreciative of the love and respect that was so deservingly accorded to him, and he *never* took that for granted.

"A consummate gentleman and genius musician, he was powerfully driven by a work ethic guided by integrity and excellence and worked harder than just about anyone I've ever known. Part of the reward for that hard work was that he lived a dynamic and BIG life... Not always easy, sometimes agonisingly difficult, but colourful, eventful, rich... and epic.

"During his last years, I recall him telling me that he felt he had said pretty much everything that he had wanted to say artistically. However, knowing him, I think there would *always* have been more – but the comforting thought of having left a meaningful and substantial body of work behind, made him feel he had lived his life well and with clear purpose.

Without question, Neil was a "one-off" who possessed an extraordinary heart and mind, combined with a singular, original talent, an incredibly dry sense of humour and a lovingly generous, loyal spirit. Dedicated and passionate about everything to which he applied that exceptional brain – grace, success, eloquence and excellence would have followed him in *whatever* path he had pursued in life.

"Over our 30-year friendship, he became like a brother to me – and although our 'day jobs' brought us together, our friendship went considerably beyond that. I miss that, and I miss him."

Image: Joey Foley/Getty Images

"A CONSUMMATE GENTLEMAN AND GENIUS MUSICIAN..."

chiming guitar work from Alex Lifeson. Lee hit the note at the start of the song and the note was out of tune. Lee immediately looked to the side of the stage, stopped playing and ran behind the curtain to correct the problem. Peart continued playing, Lifeson continued chiming and Lee was back in on the beat within seconds with a properly tuned instrument.

Watching them react and seeing the smiles on all of their faces as they transitioned out of what could have been a train wreck, was an excellent glimpse into the looser live attitude they adopted during their latter career. Looser however does not mean sloppier. After so many years of being the staunch perfectionists that they were, Rush was finding room for fun. Their response to the above anecdote is but one small example of that. Other indicators were their brilliant short films played before shows, after intermissions and sometimes after the concert had ended (available on the plethora of live videos the band has in their discography). Their involvement with several movies and television shows, most of a comedic nature, are all examples of Rush seemingly embracing the belief that sometimes life is too serious to be taken seriously. Being a staunch perfectionist all the time is exhausting, but Peart and Rush were finding room to relax.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I never had the opportunity to interview or meet Mr Peart. As a music journalist, he was at the top of my short list as a feature subject, and I would have leapt at the chance to have had a conversation with the man. Sadly, that was not to be. However, I felt like I knew him through his music, lyrics and books. He wrote his heart on his sleeve, and if you want to know the man, all you have to do is enjoy the vast catalogue of material he has left behind.

If I had been given the gift of meeting him in person, I always fantasised about what I would say. I had decided on, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Mr Peart. I really admire your work, and your drumming's not too shabby either". I have a feeling he would have appreciated that.

Thank you, Neil, for everything and know that your garden grows throughout the world and continues to be fruitful and bear inspired drummers and musicians in a plentiful harvest.

Neil Peart aka 'The Professor'. Born September 12th, 1952. Died January 7th, 2020.

PEERS ON PEART

Tributes from fellow artists...

>> without wanting to add those same skills to my toolbox. I'm not a stadium rocker and never will be. That said, Neil's drive to look fearlessly into an abyss will continue to be an inspiration. His curiosity and thirst for knowledge made him such a wonderful role model for all of us. The man had it all, but he continued to read and study. His was a life well lived. A good lesson for us all.

"My favourite memory is of seeing that smile of his in the missives he emailed to me. That, and the sheer pleasure that drumming brought him. He delighted in it, he celebrated it, he exuded and enthused it."

DANNY CAREY (TOOL)

Image: courtesy of Danny Carey

"In 1976, I was well immersed into the prog rock world. I was literally wearing out Yes, King Crimson, Genesis and ELP records monthly. It would take a lot for anything on the radio to spark my attention, so my snobby group of friends and I relied upon word of mouth from each other and our older brothers to discover new music.

"I will never forget walking into my younger brother Dale's bedroom, where he was playing *2112*. It made a really big impact from the first moment. There was great clarity in [Rush producer] Terry Brown's recording. All the 'proggy' elements that I loved were there, but it also had more of an aggressive quality to it. I really liked Geddy's voice also – it kind of scared me.

"Neil's drumming has always sounded very thought out and composed to me, which is rare in my world of rock. There is always a high level of articulation and sympathy to the other parts happening around him and excellent choices to help lead them through the journey. This is where his playing had its biggest impact on me. It was very good timing for me to hear Rush when I did, as I had just gotten my first Ludwig Stainless Steel Octa-Plus. At this stage of my playing, it was very inspiring to have this giant kit – but also somewhat intimidating.

"Listening to Neil's use of all the concert toms and percussion toys really helped me get a feel for how to use all of these new possibilities and apply them in a musical way. The thing I wanted to emulate most from Neil's playing, along with the aforementioned compositional choices, was his sound – specifically from the *Moving Pictures* album. The concert toms and kick sounds on that record are some of the best I've ever heard to this day.

"My favourite memory has to be the first time we met. It was about 10 or 15 years ago backstage at one of his shows in LA. They always say you never want to meet your heroes, so I was quite nervous about being there. Luckily, I had met Alex [Lifeson] before, and he introduced us. Neil's smile and hospitality were so welcoming, that all of my fears vanished instantly. The funny thing was, I don't think we talked about drums once. It was strictly about the important things like Scotch, BBQ sauce, motorcycles and family! I think that's the biggest reason we became friends.

"'Limelight' is a great example of playing the right thing at the right time and leading a song where it's supposed to go. A must for anyone who wants to learn from the best."

THE DRUM SETS OF NEIL PEART

Image: Paul Natkin/Getty Images

A tour through the evolution of Neil's dazzling kits, from his first MIJ set all the way to his R40's 'El Darko'

Words: Geoff Nicholls

A major part of our fascination with Neil Peart concerns his drum kits, which rank among the most talked about, ever. So, in this corner of our tribute we highlight some of the major stages that led to his ultimate setup. We aim to present a flavour of the relentless endeavour behind a lifetime quest.

It would be impractical here to detail *all* his kits – they would more than fill the magazine. Luckily, since his fans are so devoted, you can find forensic details online. For a mind-blowingly full account, visit: https://bit.ly/3oZBnEq

INSPIRATIONS

Peart himself name-checked umpteen drummer influences over the years. But as a youngster, his imagination was sparked and shaped by Gene Krupa in jazz and Keith Moon in rock, both of these rascals making a huge impression with their unrivalled showmanship.

Although serious and studious where Moon and Krupa were outrageous and outgoing, Peart nevertheless determined to put the drummer centre stage in his own way. He would develop an elaborate style, necessitating a hugely extended kit. Thus, he inspired thousands of drummers via the spectacle of his mega setups, through which he determined to muster every bit of tonal colour, especially in his solo pieces.

BEGINNINGS

Neil signalled a lifelong intention to take his instrument seriously when he spent his first year labouring over a single drum pad. As a reward, aged 14, he got his first kit, a budget Stewart three piece – a so-called MIJ (Made In Japan) "stencil" kit, badged by Pearl (see this month's 'Vintage View').

It was in red sparkle and presaged his enduring taste for red drums. Having said which, his first pro kit, a couple of years later, was a mid-sixties Steel-Grey Ripple American Rogers, in small 20", 12" and 14" sizes. He had a penchant for small sizes early on, although he quickly found his liking for slamming the drums hard.

He soon added a second bass drum, an essential part of the post-Ginger Baker and Keith Moon look. Ginger was the inspiration for every drummer to take the rock drum solo to a new level. Neil told *Rhythm* in March 2014: "Ginger Baker certainly opened the floodgates with 'Toad', the vehicle for my own first solos".

But since Rush became an unashamedly '70s prog rock band, their musical antecedents were the British originators: King Crimson, Yes, Jethro Tull, Genesis and ELP (Emerson, Lake and Palmer), all of whom had drummers whose styles and qualities would bend Neil's ears. Michael Giles's pinpoint snare drum work on Crimson's '21st Century Schizoid Man'; Bruford's pioneering use of electronics and odd times; Phil Collins's crowd-friendly multi-tom solo features – incorporating elements of all these (and numerous others) meant that Neil inevitably had to formulate bigger and bigger kits.

Historically, however, it is the bombast and bravura of Carl Palmer that is closest to the Peart model. Palmer's tuned percussion, classical side drum technique, his mammoth solos on a revolving stage incorporating acoustic and electronic elements – all found their way into Neil's armoury. And ELP was a trio, like Rush.

Carl led the trend for fabulous custom kits in the first prog era, but Peart fans should know that his antecedents can be traced all the way back to Sonny Greer in the 1930's Duke Ellington orchestra. To do justice to Ellington's sumptuously orchestrated pieces, Sonny assembled a custom-graphics finished drum set alongside chimes, timps, vibraphone and gong on a riser that rivals even that of Neil. Sonny surely would have loved Neil's sets. And in his first *Rhythm* interview back in March 1987, Peart himself had this to say regarding his then-Tama setup: "I look on it as my own personal orchestra that I can orchestrate and conduct".

NO RUSH - THE SLINGERLAND ERA (1974 to 1979)

In 1974, Neil joined Rush and began his association with Slingerland. American companies were still riding high – Slingerland claimed to have the world's

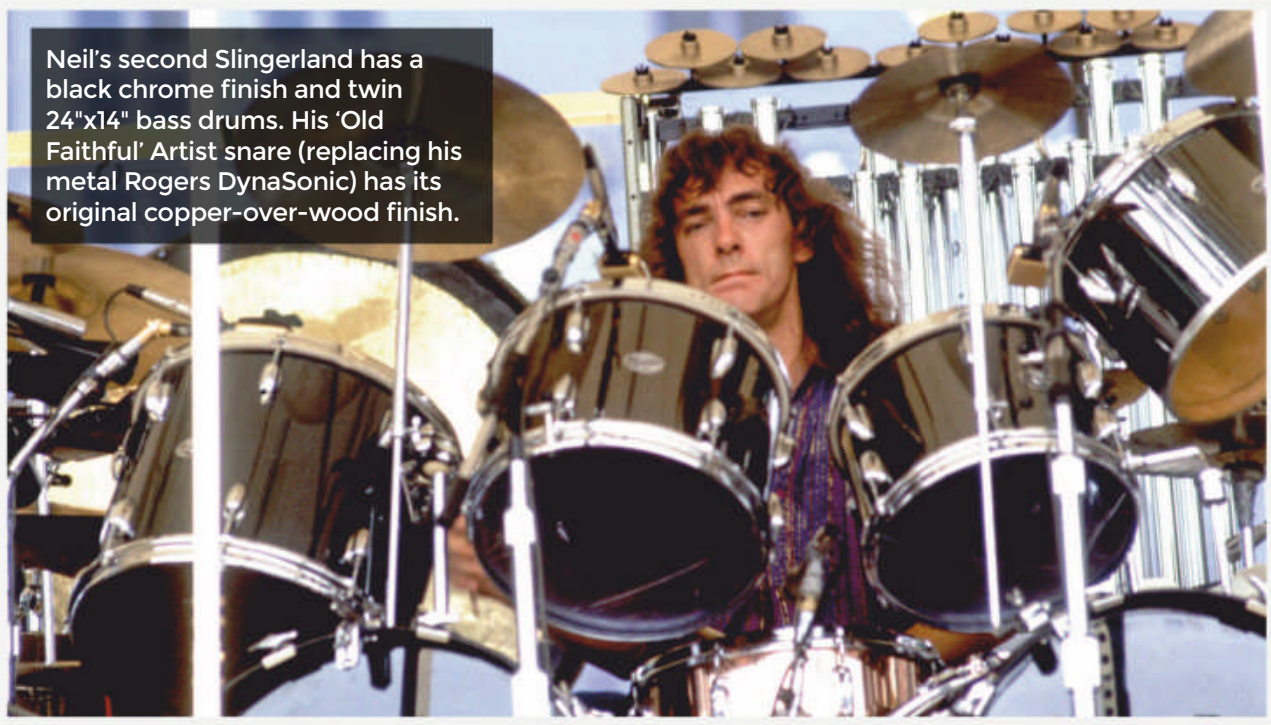

Neil's second Slingerland has a black chrome finish and twin 24"x14" bass drums. His 'Old Faithful' Artist snare (replacing his metal Rogers DynaSonic) has its original copper-over-wood finish.

Image: Paul Natkin/Getty Images

18+

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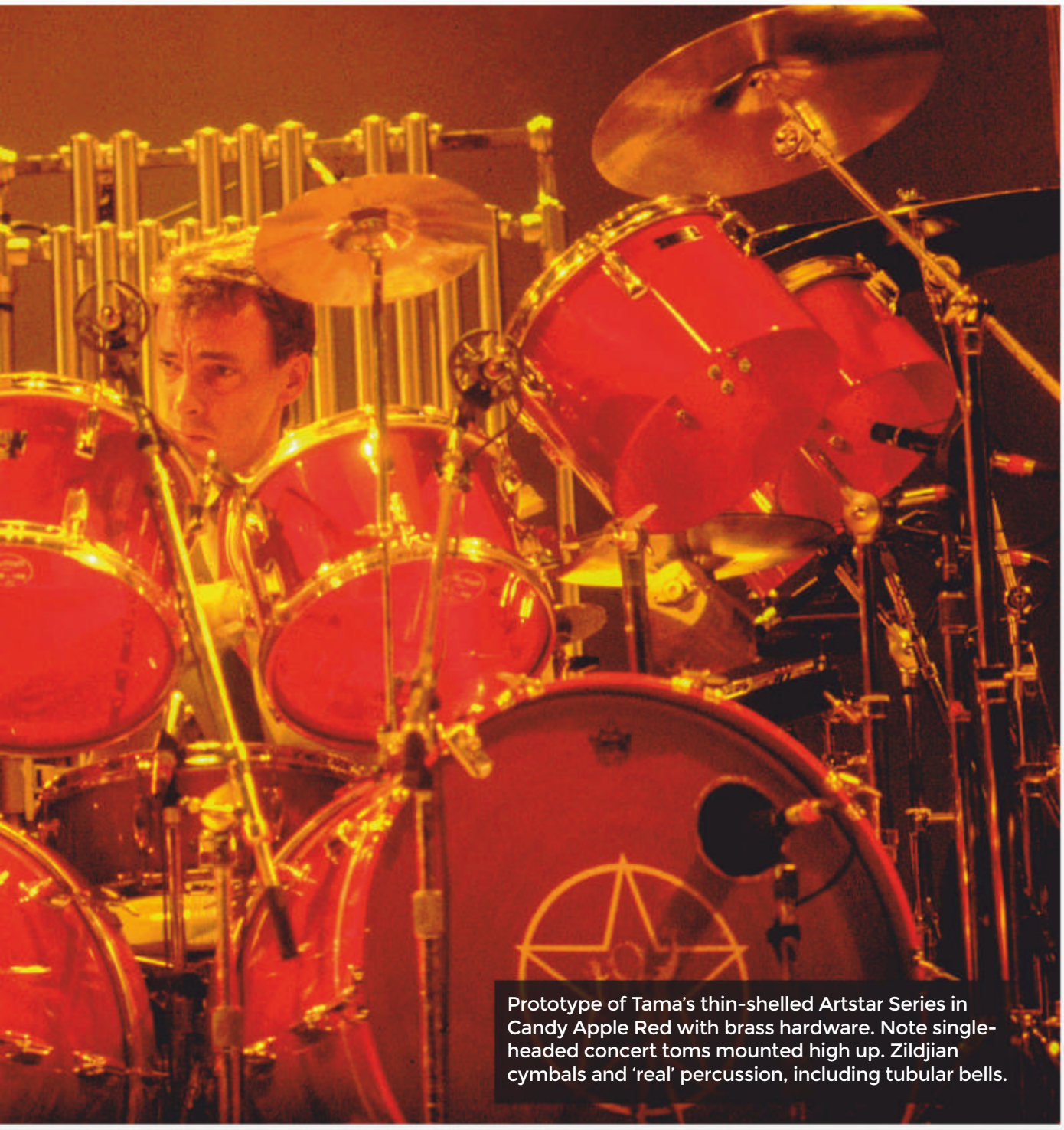


Prototype of Tama's thin-shelled Artstar Series in Candy Apple Red with brass hardware. Note single-headed concert toms mounted high up. Zildjian cymbals and 'real' percussion, including tubular bells.

biggest state-of-the-art, custom-built factory, and Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa were the company's star endorsers. Slingerland's full-colour catalogues around this time were drop-dead gorgeous. Chrome and copper-clad drums were the stars, and the cover of the 1973 catalogue is emblazoned with a show-stopping double-kick copper clad Concord kit.

Accordingly, Peart bought a chrome-over-wood kit in larger sizes: two 22"x14" kicks, two 13"x9" mounted toms, plus a 14"x10" and 16"x16" floor tom. Keith Moon had previously played a chrome kit, so it was a cool, modern look. Cymbals were Avedis Zildjians: 13" New Beat hi-hats, 16", 18" and 20" crashes and a 22" Ping ride, a favourite for the next three decades.

OLD FAITHFUL 'NUMBER ONE'

Shortly after, Neil found a copper-over-wood Slingerland snare – acquired secondhand for $60! The previous owner had filed down the snare beds, resulting in improved response at all dynamics. This thin (three-ply, eight-lug) wood-shelled Artist model snare became his go-to, especially live, right up till his DW years in 1994. He even repainted the copper covering to match some later kits.

CONCERT TOMS

For the *Caress Of Steel* tour in 1975, Neil expanded his palette with four single-headed concert toms, plus the inclusion of various items of percussion: temple blocks, tubular bells, timbales, wind chimes, bell tree, triangles and a glockenspiel.

The concert toms were mounted high up to his left and tuned high to give a broad sweep of pitches all the way down to the floor tom – a feature that quickly became synonymous with the drummer. More and more drummers were intrigued by this, and he garnered many more fans.

The evolution continued as the bass end was bolstered with twin 24" diameter kicks while applying a fibreglass coating to the insides of the drums – a bit like Pearl's famous Woodfibre Series of the era. This process of "Vibrafibing" was undertaken by Percussion Centre of Fort Wayne, Indiana. The theory was that it evened out and sharpened the tonality. Peart later admitted that he was not sure if it did much, but it certainly didn't do any harm.

THE TAMA YEARS (1979 to 1987)

As the '70s came to a close, the American drum companies were sinking fast and the Japanese coming on strong. None more so than Tama, with the input of the revelatory Billy Cobham. Tama's toughened hardware made the outmoded American staples look tired and transformed the modern kit, while Cobham's rediscovery of the mounted gong bass drum also caught Peart's eye.

With Tama willing and able, Neil made the inevitable switch. His first kit was stained "a dark rosewood effect", apparently inspired by his own household Chinese furniture. This was the first of his custom finishes – and also the first with brass-plated hardware.

Tama's birch shells were quite thick, and, following a chance 1981 studio encounter with the thin shells of a vintage English Hayman kit (belonging to Corky Laing of the band Mountain), Neil suggested Tama try something different.

Accordingly, for the 1982 *Signals* album and tour, his new Candy Apple Red finish kit, again with brass hardware, had thinner shells – prototypes of what became the top-line Tama Artstar.

NEW ERA ELECTRONICS

The early '80s saw the arrival of drum machines and electronic kits as the computer/digital technology upheaval gathered pace. Accordingly, Peart was able to start swapping his fiddly real percussion instruments for handy electronic substitutes.

However, this was early days, so the Simmons SDS-V brain/pads and Shark trigger pedals shared space with a mini acoustic kit. This latter incorporated an 18"x14" Tama acoustic bass drum and a full set of Zildjians in a rear-facing 'satellite' kit. For 1984's *Grace Under Pressure* tour, Peart played 'Red Sector A' on this satellite kit with his back to the audience, hastening the necessity for a revolving riser. Henceforth, both acoustic and electronic setups would revolve to face the audience: the ultimate Peart setup that would thrill audiences for decades. Also, as digital sampling technology proceeded, Peart was quick to start making his own unique samples, which he would continue to expand on for the rest of his career.

Incidentally, the erection of the later two-sided kits was an event in itself. All stands were made to screw into special receivers precisely located in the 9'-by-9' octagonal riser platform boards. There's fascinating footage of this here in a video showing the setting up of his kits at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado : https://bit.ly/3eucEDb

ALL CHANGE AGAIN

However good the Tama kits, it is clear Peart was always looking for the next challenge – both in his playing and his search for the ultimate sounds. I'm old enough to remember when he announced in *Modern Drummer* in May 1987 that he had tested out six alternative makes of kit. And it was a pleasant surprise when he concluded that the then-somewhat-unfashionable Ludwig was the chosen outfit for his next phase.

This boosted Ludwig's prestige at a time when the company was somewhat languishing, no doubt hastening its return

STICKS

While his kits continued to evolve, Neil – unusually – chose pretty much the same stick to wield throughout his long career. This was Promark's Rock-747. He bought the sticks for 17 years before finally becoming an autograph endorsee in 1991. Another interesting fact is that while the great majority of players favour hickory, Neil's 747s were Japanese Shira Kashi oak – a slightly harder, denser and less giving material, providing extra clarity. One acolyte has even gone so far as to list all the sticks he played: www.neilpeartdrumsticks.com

ELECTRONIC PERCUSSION

Alongside his move to Ludwig in 1987, Neil added a MalletKAT electronic marimba – which took the place of his woodblocks, crotales and glockenspiel – and Akai S900 samplers – which he played through Yamaha trigger-to-MIDI converters. He would gradually amass a huge collection of sounds, carefully sampling his own drums and percussion in addition to ethnic percussion and myriad 'found' sounds.

He swapped to ddrum pads which were kinder on the hands and wrists than the table-top-hard Simmons. Then, after the new millennium, his mixture of ddrums and acoustics were swapped for a full set of Roland TD-20 V-Drums. In all later kits, these were encased in DW shells to match the rest of the acoustic kit. He even included Roland V-Drum cymbals and hi-hat.

The MalletKAT became a familiar sight, up to the left of his main kit with his bank of cowbells above. And on his final kit, a small Dauz trigger pad, located just to the left of his main snare, was even painted with a target, referencing The Who once more.

HOMEGROWN CYMBALS

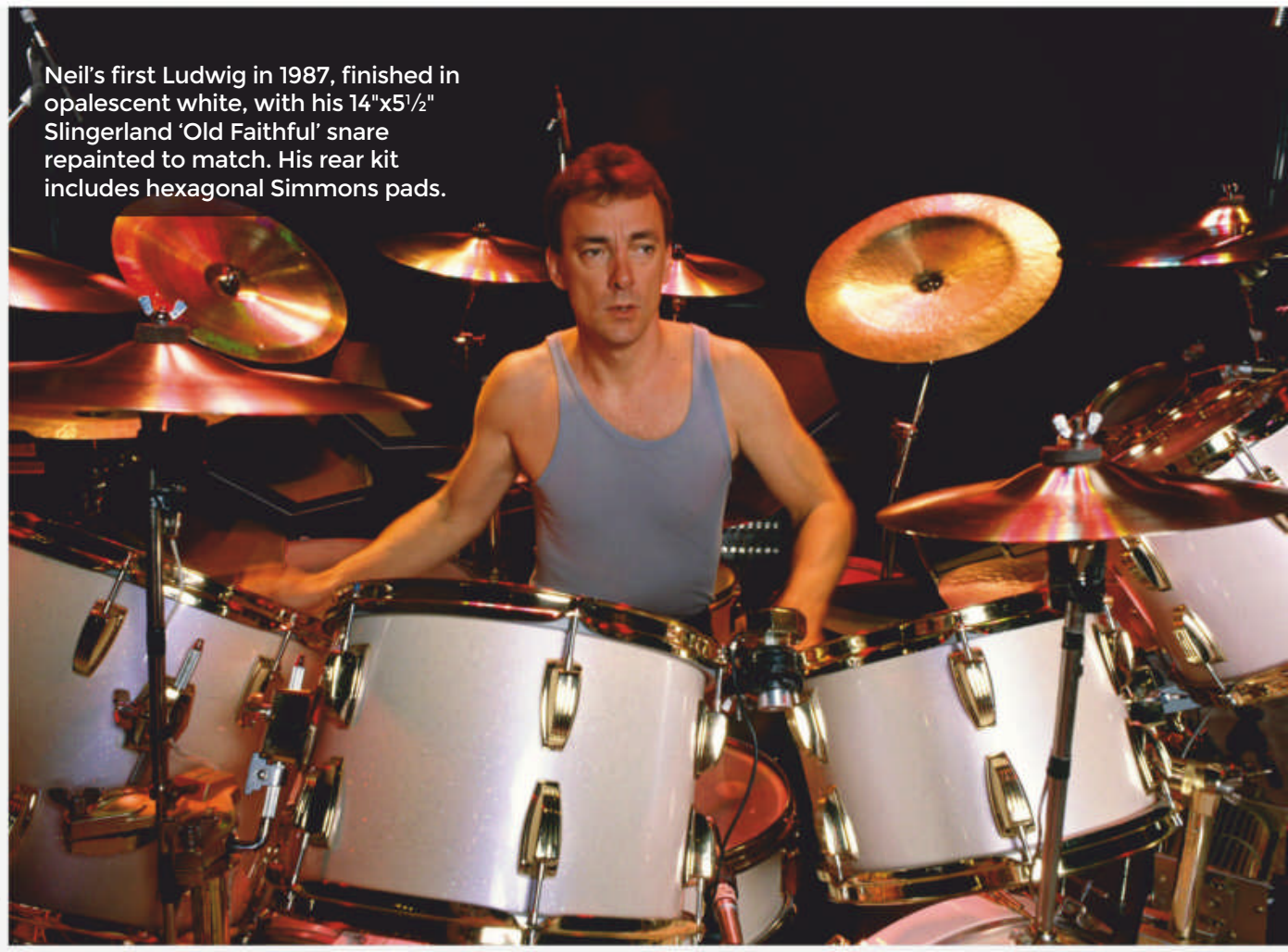
Neil played Zildjians (with the regular addition of an authentic Wuhan China) right up until 2003 when he changed to Sabian.

Despite his power, Neil preferred 13" main hi-hats over 14s, only finally swapping for 14" Paragon Brilliants for the *Time Machine* tour.

His A Zildjian 22" Ping ride was also his favourite right the way through to the Paragon years. In fact, the cymbal had been made in the Sabian factory when it was still part of Zildjian.

The extraordinary steampunk designs applied to the Paragons were developed by Chris Stankee and Mark Love after searching for an ink that would not affect the sound.

WIN!
SABIAN PARAGON PERFORMANCE SET
SEE PAGE 91



Neil's first Ludwig in 1987, finished in opalescent white, with his 14"x5½" Slingerland 'Old Faithful' snare repainted to match. His rear kit includes hexagonal Simmons pads.

Image: Mick Hutson/Getty Images

to favour. The resulting Super Classic kit is my personal favourite of the entire pre-DW era. The pearly white opalescent finish and the brass-plated Ludwig Classic lugs, combined with classy bass drum graphics, made this kit the shiniest of his career – a surprising contrast with his mostly darker red kits.

He stuck with his Old Faithful Slingerland snare also, getting it painted to match the rest of the kit.

DON'T LOOK BACK

By this time, Peart had acquired a large number of big drum kits, and it seems he was not overly sentimental in disposing of some of them. He'd already given away his first Tama in 1982 via an essay writing competition in *Modern Drummer*, and now (this time via a drumming competition in 1987) he would give away two Slingerland chrome-clad kits and his Candy Apple Tama. Plus, the satellite Simmons e-kit was thrown in. So out there are some lucky owners!

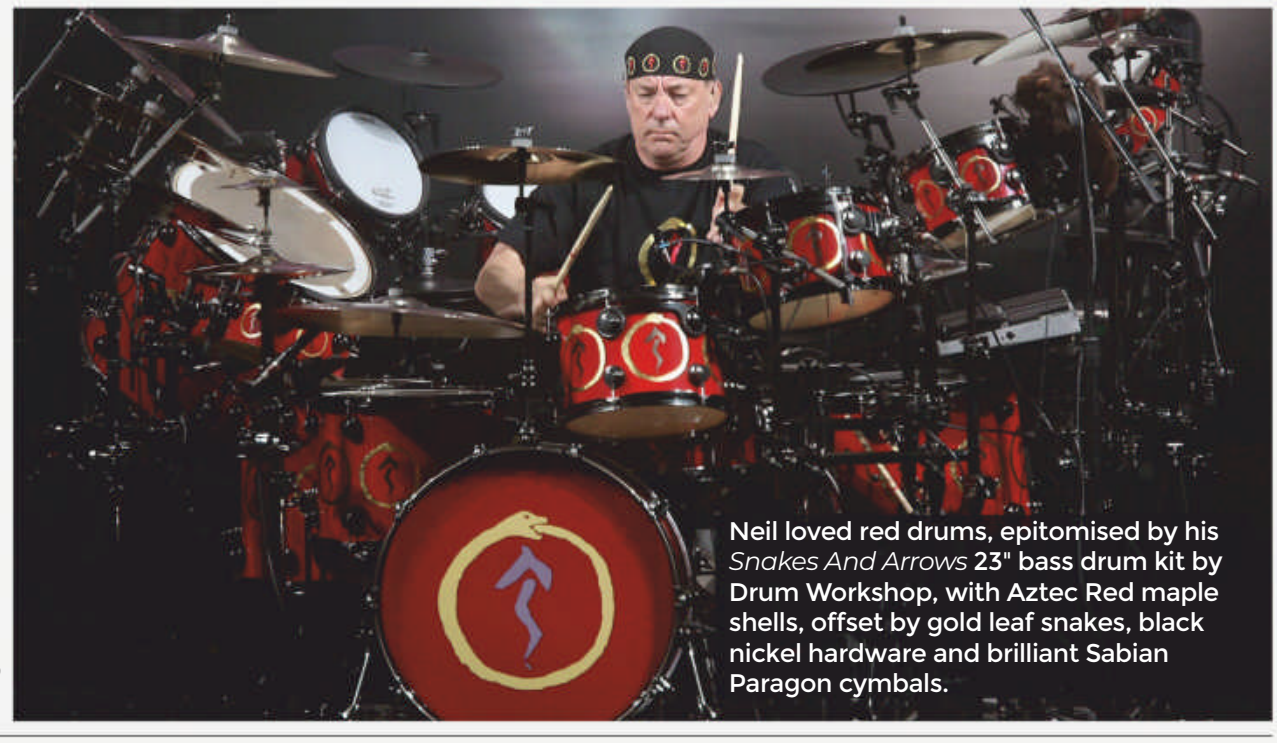
He was practical, too, not just ordering new kits simply because he could. He occasionally got a kit repainted when presumably he could as easily have got a new set. If the drums still sounded good, he would stick with them and refurbish them.

INTO THE NINETIES – DOUBLE TO SINGLE KICK

With another new decade and 1991's *Roll The Bones* came a major new development. Kick pedal construction had improved to the point where many drummers decided that just the one bass drum fitted with a double pedal was the smart way forward. Peart had been waiting for this to happen, and he now changed his twin 24" Ludwig kicks for a single 22"x16".

For years, Neil's double-kick setup had been the epitome of the post-Ginger Baker/Billy Cobham/Keith Moon model. But after he rationalised his setup to a single kick, it took on a distinctive sculpted shape with that dramatic sweep from elevated top left to bottom right, which became synonymous with the drummer and part of his persona.

After seven years, Neil's third and final Ludwig kit had a Black Cherry finish and was seen on the band's 1994 *Counterparts* album and tour.



Neil loved red drums, epitomised by his *Snakes And Arrows* 23" bass drum kit by Drum Workshop, with Aztec Red maple shells, offset by gold leaf snakes, black nickel hardware and brilliant Sabian Paragon cymbals.

Image: Jesse Grant/Getty Images

Image: George Pimentel/Getty Images

Reaching a peak of sophistication with the *Clockwork Angels* kit, Neil is seen here playing the rear 'satellite' kit with Roland TD-20X V-Drums encased in DW shells.

Image: Gary Miller/Getty Images

Celebrating four decades of Rush, Neil's *R40* 'modern' kit has shells of 1,500 year old bog oak with a Dyed Black Pear veneer and recalls Keith Moon's 'Pictures Of Lily' kit with its inlaid oblong panels.

TRAIL-BLAZING WITH DW

The final chapter in Neil's pursuit came with the move to Drum Workshop in 1995. There was an element of inevitability in this, what with Neil's restless searching and DW's willingness to experiment. It felt like he had found his home, and indeed, his first *Test For Echo* and *Vapor Trails* DW kit was in red sparkle, like his first Stewart kit all those years before.

In the YouTube age, DW's John Good has done much to demystify ply shell construction. It's not that others working with wood do not know this stuff, but Good clearly relishes laying it out for all to see. There's a video of Peart playing the 'straight guy' to Good's 'salesman' demonstrating the dramatic effects on shell tonality of bending veneers in different planes: vertical, horizontal and diagonal: https://bit.ly/32gEYUQ

Peart delights in witnessing this demo, and it's another small but not insignificant nugget of education that Peart, as the eternal drum student, was keen to share.

The upshot was that Good and Peart could together go on testing out ply combinations in the quest for the ideal shell layups to maximise the potential of each individual drum in their successive kits. Perhaps the biggest compliment Neil paid DW was in being able at last to retire his Old Faithful Slingerland snare and play exclusively DW snares at live shows.

COMING HOME

After the mid-2000s, Peart's final decade of DW kits took drum art to a stunning peak. For Rush's 30th anniversary in 2004, he was honoured with a signature Edge (wood shell with brass edges) snare drum and R30 "S. S. Professor" kit, finished in custom black with gold flakes, Rush logos and 24-carat-gold hardware. This was followed in 2006 by a Tobacco Sunburst kit permanently stored at DW for practice/recording and dubbed the West Coast Recording Kit.

Then the following year came the spectacular *Snakes And Arrows* tour kit, finished in Aztec Red and featuring motifs in gold leaf and metallic grey satin. The ancient snaking shapes also symbolised the winding road beloved by Peart, the motorbike fanatic.

The radical feature of this kit was a 23" diameter bass drum. It came about when Peart recalled how he had always enjoyed the punch that a 24" kick delivers in live venues, but found the feel of playing a 22" preferable. Good took his cue and came back with a 23", the perfect compromise.

As for shell construction, this followed the VLT (vertical low timbre) pattern, i.e., with outer and inner veneers laid vertically for a deeper fundamental. When applied to the snare drums, Peart felt this was the best snare he had ever played "for both response and sound".

CLOCKWORK ANGELS

The pinnacle of all this experimentation came with the *Time Machine* and *Clockwork Angels* kit seen between 2010 and 2013. The kit was made from Collector's Series Maple SSC (specialised shell construction) drums with a mixture of VLT, X (diagonal) and VLX shells. Overlaying these was a single ply of walnut with unforgettable "barrel-stave redwood, copper leaf and silver alchemy symbols" created by DW's artist Louie Garcia. The whole caboodle was set off with copper lugs and steampunk-detailed hardware. Truly a sight to behold.

Steampunk designs were also applied to the Sabian Paragon cymbals. And even the octagonal drum riser was given the steampunk treatment by Xite Labs, who created visuals to play within the riser's video 'portholes' – for an in-depth look, see *Rhythm*, August 2011.

R40 LIVE (2015)

In the end, celebrating four decades of Rush, Neil came almost full circle with 'El Darko', a stylistic replica of the double-kick Slingerland he had played in the '70s, complete with single-headed concert toms and real orchestral chimes.

He played this alongside his up-to-date setup with the single 23" kick. The shells of both kits were extra special, being crafted from an ancient bog oak log which had been preserved for 1,500 years in the silt of the River Olt in Romania.

El Darko had a black chrome finish (recalling the '70s Slingerland), while the contemporary kit was finished in Dyed Black Pear and topped off with gold hardware.

It's fitting that with this kit Neil also completed another full circle, referencing his adolescent hero Keith Moon. The use of oblong shell panels was inspired by Moon's 1967 'Pictures Of Lily' kit – achieved with meticulously inlaid hardwoods.

MEMORIES OF NEIL

Three key industry friends and colleagues share their personal memories of The Professor

Lorne 'Gump' Wheaton (Neil's drum tech)

Image: courtesy of Lorne Wheaton

"It was in 2000 that I got a call from Rush's then-tour manager, Liam [Birt], to see if I'd be able to help them make a record. Neil was coming back after the tragic loss of his wife and daughter, and because I could cover everything in the studio, I was going to be the only tech for the whole session. For me, it was like going back to family... I'd known Geddy [Lee] and Alex [Lifeson] since high school in Toronto, and, after Neil joined, had toured with them while I was working with Max Webster. I actually have Geddy to thank for my nickname, 'Gump'!

"I'm so proud to have helped them singlehandedly with *Vapor Trails* – it was an incredible process to be part of – and working for Neil was wonderful from the off. He trusted me to be his ears in the control room when it came to drum sounds on that record, and it was great to see him starting to enjoy the whole process again. Alex and Geddy were so happy to see Neil comfortable in his 'office' doing what he did best: experimenting, creating and writing lyrics. His brain worked like no other drummer I have ever known, and the parts he came up over the course of his career are just incredible.

"While we were in the studio for that year, I did a lot of work with Neil in updating his gear. There was the new Red Sparkle kit and hardware from Drum Workshop, and he started using Roland V-Drums and in-ear monitoring for the first time. It made his whole configuration more friendly for the both of us, and we ended up using that setup on the *Vapor Trails* tour. When it came to building kits with DW, John [Good] and Don [Lombardi] didn't have 'no' in their vocabulary, and the results were truly mind-blowing!

"I was taught how to tune drums by Steve Smith – one of the very best – and the timbre matching that John Good does with all his drums before they leave DW made Neil's kits easy to tune and bring up sonically. We tended to tune to the note stamped inside the shell at the factory, but I'd always crank the smaller toms up higher, to get that early Rush concert tom tone on the closed 8", 10" and 12".

"You'd think because Neil hit so hard that we'd go through drumheads quickly, but surprisingly we didn't... That was thanks to Freddie [Gruber] and what he taught Neil. After those lessons, Neil's whole setup changed: he sat slightly higher on the throne, his snare drum moved up to navel height and the tom configuration opened up around him. Rather than punching through the drums, he played into them – almost like the sticks were dancing. He liked the sound of old heads, so, during soundchecks, I would rotate two or three on the drums that he hit most to wear them in. Even though the band were playing nearly three hours, I'd only change the snare head every three shows, which was unbelievable, really.

"When Neil was on the road, it was all about routine, and prior to every show he would warm up for exactly 20 minutes – always practising a little bit of his solo. I liked at least a couple of hours to put his main kit together, and then I would drive myself crazy checking everything. My 'station' was eight feet away from the kit, and I saw everything from my vantage point – it was the best place on earth to be.

"WORKING FOR NEIL WAS WONDERFUL FROM THE OFF..."

"Neil and I bounced along very happily together for all those years – I knew how he liked things, and he knew that I had his back if anything went wrong. Because everything was locked down on the rotating drum platform, there was only one slim entrance to get inside the drum set if we did have a problem. Once, when we had a failure on the main R30 kit pedal, I remember Geddy turning around to be greeted by my arse as I tried to get in through the front of the kit! Some drummers would completely loose it when something like that happened, but Neil – even though he wasn't happy – kept it together.

"Neil gave his all, all of the time – never more so than on that final tour, which was hard for him physically. It's almost like he wanted to torture himself with a final workout by using those two different drum sets. He went from playing the modern kit that he'd had for 15 years to the retro kit that required him to go back to his old style of playing pre-Freddie, because everything was in different places. It was quite amazing how he got his brain around that, but he was such an intelligent man. So many of his buddies came down to The Forum to see that final show, and it was a pretty perfect night."

Image: Drum Workshop

Image: courtesy of Chris Stankee

Chris Stankee (Global Artist Relations Director, Sabian)

"Neil was a creature of habit, and change for him was always calculated and deliberate, but when we developed the Paragon line, he finally had the chance to get the exact blend of modern and vintage that he wanted. Months of development went into those cymbals, and we started with the ride – such an important sound for any drummer, and an integral part of the equation when it came to Neil and Rush. He ended up using that ride for everything, and I still have it. I'll cherish it forever, and I'm delighted to be able to share it with other drummers when they come and visit Sabian.

"Neil always had two 16" crashes up front and used the one directly in front of him the most. When that would eventually break, he'd take the 16" to his left and move it down – he liked the 'broken in' tone. Eventually, though, I managed to persuade him to let us make him cymbals with a brilliant finish, that sound and feel that way right out of the box. He never changed that ride though, but because Lorne [Wheaton] cleaned it with cream every day, it ended up with the same sheen as the brilliant cymbals and fitted into the setup perfectly. Neil's 20" Paragon Diamondback Chinese – with the jingles on top – was really fun to develop, and I'll also always remember when Peter Erskine inspired him to move from his regular 13" hi-hats to 14s. The combination, and difference in tonality, of those 14" Paragons, and the 14" Artisans on the X-hat worked great, and you can hear them all over *Snakes And Arrows* and *Clockwork Angels*. To hear those sounds we developed together on a Rush record, so masterfully engineered by Nick Raskulinecz, and to have played a part in what Neil was using as his voice, was such an honour.

"Watching Neil at work in the studio was amazing. Knowing how composed his parts were on those early records, it was interesting to see him change his approach gradually in those later years and be open to improvisation and other people's suggestions. I'd watch him do multiple takes – where he'd completely change his sentence, colours and meaning – and then have the choice of what suited the song best. It was almost like he was drawing from his experience as a writer and lyricist – the expression of those ideas on paper – and doing the same thing with his drumming. It was especially noticeable with his solo, and when I would see several shows in a row, I could hear those nuances and the changes. His phrasing was impeccable, and over a scotch one night, I complimented him about how his phrasing had developed and how I felt he was turning sentences into paragraphs. He toasted me and thanked me for 'getting it'. It was exactly what he was trying to do…

"I had to tech for him once, and it was nerve racking to say the least. I had set him up in the studio before, so I kind of knew how things went, but all his stands travelled together in one giant case and nothing was marked. Gump knew it by heart, but I certainly didn't! Even though the snare head broke in the second song, it was an amazing experience. When you stood next to him and heard him play it was so powerful, because he hit so hard, but those massive strokes were so precise. He was able to draw the sound out of the drum kit in a way I'd never heard before, and his rim shots, on the toms in particular, were just incredible. One of the things that impressed me most about him was that as someone who was so respected, so entrenched in our psyche, he was always looking to develop and move forward.

"Unless he was on tour, or getting ready to go into the studio, Neil didn't play drums. To watch him regain his voice, power, joy and passion every time he and Lorne headed off to Drum Workshop to rehearse was just magical. That smile got bigger and bigger as the dust blew away…

"I'll never forget standing at the top of The Forum in LA with him after Rush's final show, watching the stage come down for the last time. He had an impish smile on his face, and he was happy. He realised that it was over – no words were necessary – and to share that moment with him in the empty arena, as the after-show party raged inside behind us, was very special. His development was done, and I think it's important for his fans to know that he did allow himself to enjoy everything that he achieved before he left us…"

Image: Andrew MacNaughtan

John Good (Senior Executive Vice President, Drum Workshop)

"Neil was quintessentially the epitome of family to Drum Workshop, and he felt so at home here. Every new tour was a new adventure for the two of us, and all the drum sets we built together were complemented by his style, his playing, his absolute attention to detail and his love of making a visual, and a sonic, statement of what he did. And he always pulled it off.

"I still smile when I remember the first time he came to visit… We'd never really met, but I knew that he was a very private person, and I had asked our production crew to give him space when we took our tour. Neil was fascinated by the factory – it turned out to be a very long tour! – and he was intrigued by all of the intricate details that make my heart pump when it comes to building drums. When we got back to my office, though, he asked if people here disliked him, because he hadn't been able to catch anyone's eye and nobody had really spoken to him! When I explained what I had done, we both laughed out loud, which broke the ice completely, and from that point on he became a regular visitor. So much so, that he started using our studios to rehearse in before each Rush tour. His gear would turn up, and then Neil and his tech, Lorne, would lock themselves away for weeks before he met with the rest of the band. He was always super prepared and would practice for hours. We even gave him his own parking space for his bike, or his silver-grey Aston Martin – the cutest little car for such a big man!

"Neil and I would talk constantly about the next project, and he always wanted to blow the previous kit away! I remember after the *Vapour Trails* tour, he sent the kit to my showroom so I could study and play it and see how it was tuned. Neil hit so hard, but because he hit 'right', he was pulling the sound out of the drums rather than wrecking drumheads. His drums were tuned not to the shell, but to the notes that he liked to hear, so what I got into doing was creating a shell that would deliver that note without torture. You don't have to tune something way up or way down – where it doesn't want to be – to get the right note. So, year after year we continued to plan and build new kits for him – works of art, really – that he loved, and I became known as the 'Wood Whisperer'!

"One day we happened to have a conversation about bass drums, and Neil told me how he liked the sound of a 24", but that he couldn't get the articulation he was after when he played one. That's when I developed the 23" for him – something I had always wanted to build – and Lorne and I managed to slip it into his kit at rehearsals without him knowing. He was over the moon, and that's what he played from then on.

"I visited Neil when he was ill and no longer able to drive himself, and he told me how he enjoyed a ride with his driver every day and that they would listen to three songs on the way out and three on the way back to the house. I asked him what music he was listening to and he said, 'Rush, of course! You watched me prepare for tours, for recordings – I was always prepared – but what I failed to do was actually listen to the music as a whole. I was so buried in my parts, wanting to make them the very best that they could be, that I never really listened to the band. And do you know what, John, we were pretty good!'.

“

FACE TO FACE

Uncharted Territory

RICH KASS & EVELYN GLENNIE

Rich Kass and Evelyn Glennie discuss improvisation, playing for the room and creating a new musical language in their ground-breaking collaboration with Trio HLK

Writer: **David West** Images: **Matthew Johnson Photographer/Chiltern Arts Festival**

Trio HLK is not your ordinary jazz trio. They may not even be a jazz trio at all, in any conventional sense. Comprised of Rich Kass on the drums, eight-string guitarist Ant Law and contemporary classical pianist Richard Harrold (sometimes referred to as Piano Rich), the group transcends genres and boundaries, taking jazz standards, dismantling them and then putting them back together in the most unexpected ways.

"Everybody's like a drummer in this band," says Kass, who juggles polyrhythms and multiple meters in a manner best described as mindboggling. "Everybody is very rhythmically aware, very rhythmically strong, and is using rhythm, particularly in odd time signatures that are changing every bar, to open that up and speak across it."

On their debut album, *Standard Time*, the trio are joined by percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie who guests on their arrangement of both 'Extra Sensory Perception', and the album's closing track, 'The Jig'.

"Rich Harrold asked if I would like to participate," says Glennie, who found herself moving into an unfamiliar musical world. "Jokingly – because a lot of effort went into learning the pieces – I said, 'Wouldn't it be fun to do this live?' The next thing I knew, concerts had been booked, and I was asked would I like to join them. It's been a fantastic experience."

Finding new life on stage, the trio-plus-one explore the unique language they created in the studio, taking the art of rhythm into places where most fear to tread. Their gigs attract an audience as uncategorisable as their sound, from metalheads in Meshuggah t-shirts who come to watch Ant Law shred to contemporary classical fans to drummers ready to be dazzled.

Rhythm caught up with Kass and Glennie when they were out on tour shortly before lockdown.

Was it a challenge for you, Rich, having someone else join the rhythm section?

Rich: "Actually, I don't think it was, but I think that's because with all the music, it's constantly getting refined, so if you come to a concert, I'd say half of what you hear is written and half is improvised. Even with the written stuff, we'll play it, reflect on it and have conversations about it. There has always been finetuning – this group is on a constant journey of refinement – but we're always open to change and trying to listen as much as possible, so when there's somebody else in the group, yes, at points you have to play less or play differently, but it wasn't a challenge."

Evelyn: "I think a lot of it is more texture from my point of view. When you've got someone like Rich, who's a bit of an octopus, there's no point in me adding anything. It would be overload, because they are so adaptable, they're great improvisers, and they listen so well; they are very good at analysing and reflecting, revisiting, rethinking. That's an area for me that has been really refreshing."

Were you given much direction for your contributions to the *Standard Time* album?

EG: "On those two pieces it was marimba and vibraphone, so that was the constant I suppose, and the notes were pretty much there written down because it was integral to the music that was being played. It wasn't like free improvisation, which is not my area of expertise at all. Improvisation as regards to *soundscapes* is where I mainly do a lot of my work, and so this was very much notated. I think those two pieces were a good introduction for me to get into this whole world."

RK: "What was quite interesting about that was since that happened – I don't know how many concerts we've played, it must be around 40 now – a lot of improvising has happened."

EG: "Even in the pieces that the trio does, I've never gone off stage. I can't help but be onstage just to see how they integrate, how the mechanics work, how they listen and how things morph from performance to performance. It's a real privilege."

How do you prepare for these performances?

RK: "It's quite nice that it's different every night. There is a certain amount of prep making sure we're comfortable with the music and the forms, but then there is

RK: "ONE THING I WOULD SAY IS THAT THIS MUSIC HAS BECOME A LANGUAGE WITHIN THE GROUP..."

Rich Kass and Evelyn Glennie

also a certain amount of having to actually listen to see what happens."

EG: "A lot of the rehearsal happens *after* a performance, where you're analysing. The reality we've found is that we're dependent on different sound people for each hall. It's different equipment all the time, different percussion equipment, different drums for Rich, different pianos for Piano Rich, and so on, so there were times where we were so close to the bone as regards to the start of the concert time that there was absolutely no way we had time to play through all of the pieces."

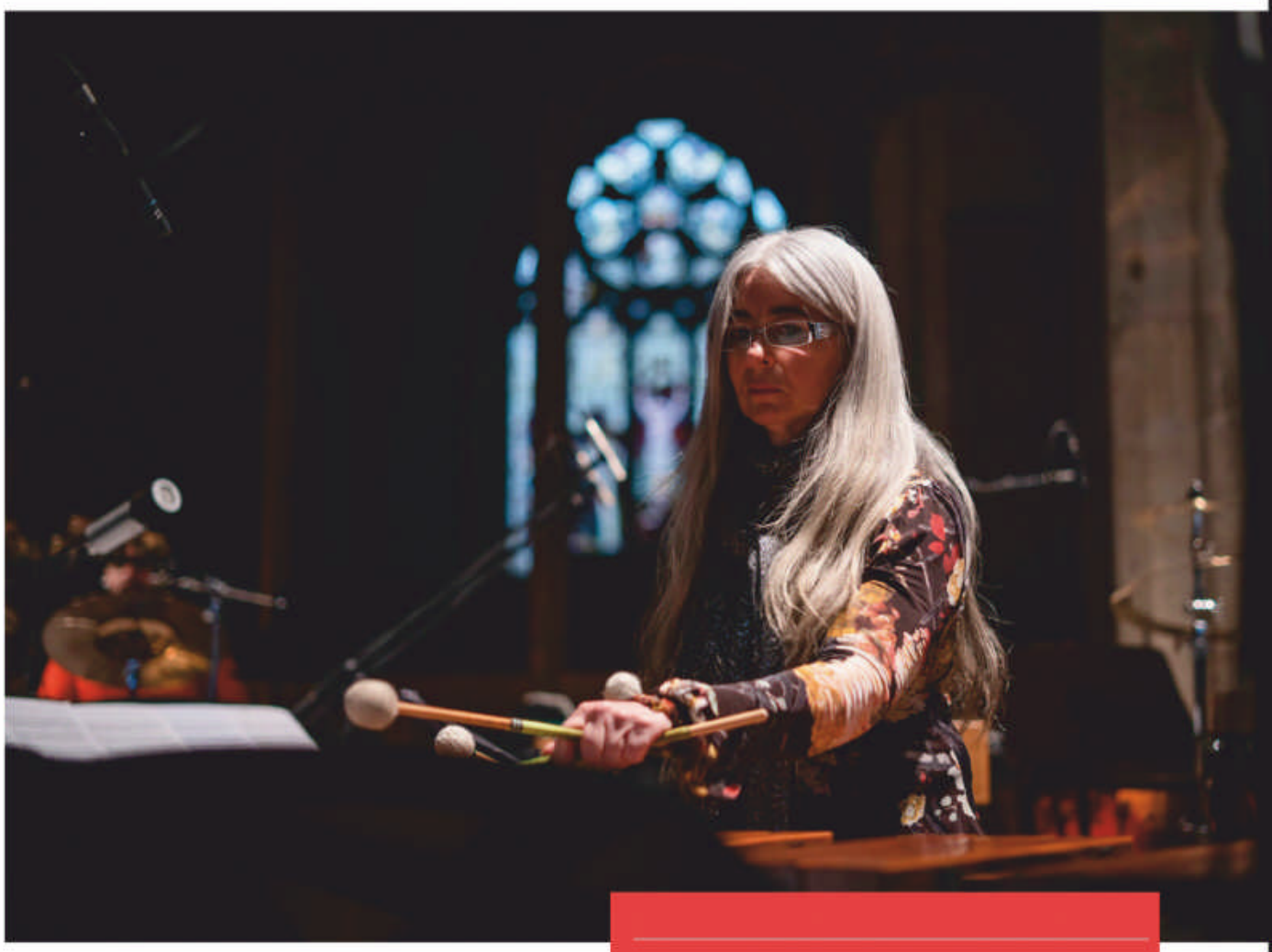
RK: "I spend a lot of time memorising solo forms. Within the pieces, if Rich has given me some music that's very involved, part of my job is to try to unify things by playing two rhythms at the same time, one of which might be happening with the piano, one with the guitar. But then there's a lot that I can't really prepare for, and there are certain things that would actually be detrimental if I just kept practising playing through the solo form with set ideas. One thing I would say is that this music has become a language within the group. I guess a lot of the prep goes into learning how to speak that language and trying to develop my voice on the instrument and my ability to make whatever is put in front of me sound good."

The mission statement behind the project is to explore rhythm, how does that work between the four of you?

EG: "The ebb and flow of each instrument is quite amazing. There isn't an expected role. Rich's way of drumming, picking up what the piano is doing, what the guitar is doing, or what the mallets are doing, that becomes a different kind of drumming then. You can't say, 'That's a jazz drummer' or 'That's this type of drummer'. It's Rich. Piano Rich is Piano Rich. Ant is Ant. You can't pigeonhole the type of musician or indeed the music. I think it is a new language, pushing the boundaries in how the people are integrating, what people are doing sound-wise in order to give a different dimension rhythmically."

RK: "We're all strongly influenced by rhythm and from different fields, so being in this group has exposed me to a much wider variety of rhythm than I had before. I really got into the likes of [contemporary classical composer György] Ligeti through Rich who originally studied classical composition. Through Ant, plus my own studies, I've got into Konnakol and Indian rhythm... All these things have their own language which we've all tried to delve into at different points.

"When I was a bit younger, I sometimes encountered people saying, 'This is really complicated, why don't you focus on a simpler thing where you could say more?' I think there's nothing wrong with that, but complex doesn't mean hard or hard sounding, and simple doesn't mean easy. Complexity just means that you have to find a way of playing something simply in some ways so that people are able to connect with it and you're able to say something which has got some expression behind it. The numbers are there to guide you to what's possible and you can develop those numbers into something people can connect with in a meaningful way with emotions and ideas and intent."



KEY KIT

EVELYN GLENNIE

Adams five-octave marimba, Adams three-octave vibraphone, Adams 32" and 30" timpani, Halo drum, Sabian cymbals, LP percussion, Arbiter drums, Black Swamp Bling snare drum

Evelyn, how did you choose what instruments you'd need for this project?

EG: "Certainly with the marimba and vibes that was easy, but with the other things we felt that for some of the pieces a more 'soundscapey' thing would be quite good... sustained sounds that may not happen on a drum kit. That was the idea of the timpani and putting things on top of the timpani, using it as a resonator. That's all that's needed as far as the percussion is concerned. For the two new pieces we've been trying, that's been vibraphone only, and a lot of that is in unison with the piano. Again, it just gives a different and longer sustain to a piano, so that works really well."

How do you approach your drum sound for this project, Rich? You've got a five-piece kit and crotales across the top?

RK: "The crotales are new. What's interesting about that is it's an octave of tuned bells. I think this collaboration, working with Evelyn and being around all this percussion, has had quite a profound impact on me. Within this music there are a lot of possibilities to be playing one rhythm and another rhythm, or accompanying myself sometimes, so I have explored that. But then also I was thinking what about the possibilities of rhythmic counterpoint and incorporating pitch within the drum kit. Could I potentially be playing some rhythmic textural stuff and also outlaying the harmony with a dyad, or could I actually be playing part of the melody?

"Within the new compositions, I've started to use these Crotales to respond to the piano and things that are happening in the melody, and I've been thinking a lot about percussion and the drum kit and how they're not separate instruments. Actually, *everything* is percussion, and there are a lot of opportunities – I've been influenced a lot by playing with one of the best percussionists in the world."

What else have you taken away from this project?

RK: "Playing to the room is something I've learned a lot about in the last couple of years. Because we've been playing some of the bigger, classical venues, we've chatted a lot about how the rooms respond. That's been an amazing learning curve – even thinking about how you solo. In the big rooms, a lot of dense stuff doesn't tend to work that well – actually, it's much better to utilise the room and play more spatially.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

“Sometimes people are expecting a certain something to appear in the programme, and of course it’s not at all that,” says Evelyn. “Then you have jazz fans, or drummer fans of Rich, or percussion fans, or the curious who just like music. Whatever the situation, behind the complexity there has to be music at the end of the day, a composition that has a story. It’s interesting how the audiences really do stick with it, because they can see that the quality of the delivery is high. That isn’t meant to be an egotistical statement, it’s simply the respect that everybody gives to what they do. I think the audiences are seeing a real connection, and this is helped through speaking throughout the evening as well, just introducing everybody and the pieces and so on. That helps to build a connection. In a way, we’re all part of the journey, whether you’re a musician or a member of the audience, we’re all growing with the pieces together, we’re all part of that composition.”

“WE’RE ALL **PART OF THE JOURNEY**, WHETHER YOU’RE A **MUSICIAN** OR A **MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE - WE’RE ALL PART OF THAT COMPOSITION.**”

KEY KIT

RICH KASS

Yamaha Hybrid Maple drum kit, Ludwig Black Beauty snare drum, Sabian cymbals, Evans heads, Vater sticks and brushes, Porter & Davies BC2

During one gig, I think it was in Estonia, at the end of 'Smalls', whenever there was a drum solo, I'd smack the bass drum and it would fill the whole bar – whereas in a smaller place, I'd play a lot of notes in the groupings. You learn so much about playing the instrument. And also with Evelyn, whenever she plays, she makes it sound so good – or when we play the two drum kits together, I listen and I'm like, 'That's how you can bring this phrase to life!'"

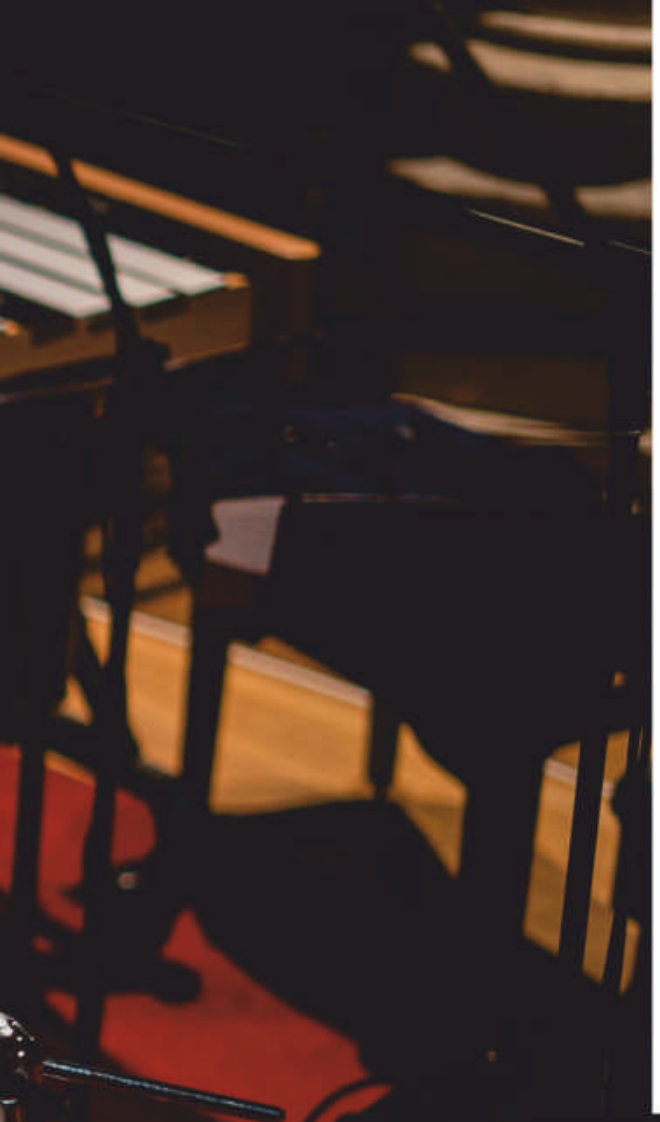
EG: "I think it's really important because you're always testing things out in an empty space, and then people come along and you've got to imagine what that might be like. I think that applies to every musician – it's a living thing, a thing you're observing every single time you walk into a room. As you're playing, you're still observing that – that's a sign of a really great musician, to pay attention. You never quite know how it's going to be out there because we are on this side of the instrument, and that can give different information than if you were three feet on the other side. You can't control or babysit every single inch of a room, but nevertheless, paying attention is really important."

RK: "To play music as well as possible, you have to be selfless. If the room sounds a certain way, you have to respond to it. If the piano can't be heard, you have to respond to it. You can't decide, 'This is a complex rhythmic form, and I've got these great ideas about how to open the form up by playing these rhythms across it, so that's what we're going to do'. You have to *submit* to what's happening in order to serve not just the music but the audience.

"It's been such a fascinating experience. Now, whenever we're doing a concert, I think about what the space is going to be like. When I start to play a solo, I think: 'How does that sound? Should I persevere with this idea?' All these small thoughts help, as long as you're not overly conscious."

Doing this project, where there's a language being created within the group, you don't have the safety net of a pre-existing paradigm to draw upon. How do you approach improvisation in this context?

EG: "Everything comes from somewhere. If you're previewing a brand-new piece of music that only you have the score for, you know that somewhere else in the world, someone in a way is already playing that piece of music, because the music is in existence, and that's why it never really takes that long for something to be duplicated. I don't think anything just appears out of the blue as though it's been dropped from Mars. Everything is an extension of something. Where *this* will go, I don't know. How it will influence people in the future, it's too early to say. It will, but in what sort of way we don't know. It would be so interesting to have another trio or quartet play exactly these pieces and see how they would approach them. It would



TIMEKEEPING AND BEYOND

“If any one of us hears something happening, we have to respond to it,” says Rich. “If I hear that there’s dialogue between Evelyn and Ant in a certain section, then I’m going to feel like a hectic solo form is not an appropriate time for me to be throwing ideas out. I need to lay out the time. It’s shapeshifting through your response, through people hearing things and deciding to be supportive. That doesn’t always go right, and that’s why every concert is different and why we keep refining. Sometimes I might play something and Rich and Ant might be like, ‘That was hard to maintain the form, what was going on there last night?’ Then in other times, Ant might say, ‘I really liked it when I did this thing and you just jumped on it and it went that way’. There’s always dialogue and shared experience and then changing. There’s also listening a lot, and if you hear someone playing something that’s really great, trying to make more of a feature of that by playing as supportively as possible and letting things organically develop.”

be absolutely fascinating, and I’m sure lots of different dimensions would come from that too and would then be a springboard for other ideas to come through.”

RK: “I agree that everything comes from somewhere, and there’s definitely a lot of experimentation involved. A wee while ago, I did an interview and someone asked how do I feel about not playing with a bass player. I thought, there is always a bass player, be it Rich or Ant. The music isn’t necessarily the music you would associate, at least in jazz, with a double bass, like AABA, thirty-two bar, 4/4, at a certain tempo. I’m not necessarily coming from that place, but I’m very influenced by that music, so a lot of the approaches of playing motivically and melodically, stating the form and referencing the melody, that’s all there still.

“Everything is influenced by quite a lot, and in some ways it takes the pressure off – for me anyway – just as if we were playing a piece of music together that you’d written [addressed to Evelyn], I’d be petrified! At least I feel with this music that it’s evolving *together* – the expectation isn’t comparing it to another performer that’s already played it with you.”

EG: “It’s funny, because when you think about the great composers of the past: Mozart, Beethoven, right up until Liszt, they were great improvisers. They notated their music, but they improvised over other people’s music, they would improvise their cadenzas – and you would think, surely this would emerge into something else or expand their playing away from the notated page, but for some reason it’s done the complete opposite. We’ve just closed the door on that, and that’s a real shame.

“I think that’s what has been really interesting about Piano Rich: he can sit down and read the most complex piece of music by any composer, and yet if you said, ‘Well, improvise on ‘Bah Bah Black Sheep’’, he would create a bit of a masterpiece out of it. That’s a real skill that has been open to people in the past, but somehow has now become a closed door.”

What does the future hold for this project?

RK: “There will be a second album. I don’t know when, but it’s not a state secret that we’re hoping to continue in the collaboration.”

Gear!

The latest kits and the new gear drummers need – reviewed and rated by our team of experts

REpercussion Drum Kit p66

After yet another unexpected hiatus, we're excited to return with a fantastic collection of new review gear. We hope you have all been keeping well through the pandemic and maybe even found a chance to spend a bit more time with your drums.

Our lead review for this issue offers a kit with an interesting story behind it. If you're unfamiliar with Glastonbury-based REpercussion Drums, The Steinbeck Flyer kit in question is a perfect example of drum builder Andrew Johnston's ethos behind the company. A complete stave kit crafted from reclaimed wood originating from a uniquely historical ship. We first got our hands on the kit back in February, so we've been waiting a long while to share it with you.

Over in e-kit land, Mark Whitlam got stuck in to Roland's TD-27KV – based around the new module, which packs several high-end features into a mid-range package.

Matt Fisher couldn't wait to check out Ludwig's latest Bronze Beauty and Pewter Copper snare drums, and it's fair to say he was not at all disappointed.

Last, but by no means least, I got my absolute geek on with The Rooms of Hansa expansion pack for Superior Drummer 3 from Toontrack.

Tom Bradley

Rhythm Gear Editor

Meet Rhythm's Reviewers

Rhythm has been reviewing the gear drummers need for decades. Our team of expert reviewers have sat behind countless kits on stage and in the studio so you can rely on them to bring you the right verdict. Plus, we find out what they've been up to during lockdown...

TOM BRADLEY

With an unquenchable thirst for new drum gear, Tom is perfectly placed to be *Rhythm*'s reviews editor. He's not only a longstanding member of our review team but also a lecturer at BIMM and a busy performing drummer. You may recognise Tom as the man behind the kit in many of the online gear videos on our YouTube channel.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

"I seized the opportunity early on to build an awesome online teaching setup, which I'm proud of. Even now it's evolving and gives me a great excuse to play with my lovely toys – and buy new ones!"

MARK WHITLAM

Mark is a freelance musician who has played for varied artists, from Mercury Prize-nominee Eliza Carthy through to jazz and funk legend Pee Wee Ellis. He is currently one-quarter of ECM recording artist Iain Ballamy's new band, featuring pianist Jason Rebello. Mark is a senior lecturer at BIMM Institute Bristol, where he has taught for the last ten years.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

"I upgraded some of my studio gear and recorded around 50 tracks for clients."

Roland
TD-27KV
p72

Toontrack
The Rooms of
Hansa SDX
p74

Ludwig
Bronze Beauty
& Pewter
Copper Snares
p70

Rhythm Verdict

The **RHYTHM RECOMMENDED** award is given to those products that score seven or eight out of ten. These are products that, although not quite scoring top marks, are strong products in their field.

The **RHYTHM STAR BUY** is awarded to those products that score nine or even ten out of ten for design, construction, function and value.

Rhythm Ratings

Here's what our ratings represent:

Poor: Sub-standard product	1 - 2
Average: Acceptable but uninspiring	3 - 4
Good: Above average	5 - 6
Excellent: Superior product	7 - 8
Outstanding: Impossible to fault	9 - 10

MATT FISHER

Matt has performed with some of the UK's most prominent musicians, such as Tina May, Jacqui Dankworth, Najma Akhtar and Steve Waterman. He has toured around the world working in a variety of styles, from jazz to world music. Matt teaches at Chichester University and is an examiner for Trinity College London.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

"I took the great Tommy Igoe's advice and have run through his *Great Hands For Lifetime* warm-up video every day. It's a great way of geting your hands and mind in gear before doing your main practice, and, of course, a brilliant way of building stamina."

REpercussion Drums Steinbeck Flyer Kit

Another slice of history transformed into a superb drum kit

Words: **Tom Bradley** Images: **James Cumpsty**

PRICE: £3,975

"If only wood could talk" seems to be the motto of British drum builder Andrew Johnston. Based in Glastonbury and founded just five years ago, Andrew runs REpercussion Drums, where he specialises in creating stave drums – each one with a hell of a backstory.

In the past, the boutique company has offered drums crafted from 5,000-year-old bog oak, beams from the famous San Quentin prison and even an old cider press (fantastically named the Scrumpy Series).

Andrew's all-consuming quest for the ultimate reclaimed wood saw him travelling to Seattle last year to bring back pieces of The Western Flyer – the boat on which the author John Steinbeck wrote *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* in 1940. The result is the aptly named Steinbeck Flyer Kit.

The unique four-piece kit comprises a 12"x10" rack tom, 16"x16" floor tom, 22"x20" bass drum and 14"x5½" snare drum. The stave shells are cut from prime growth Douglas fir, originating from the cabin and wheel house area of the historic ship. As a member of the pine family, Douglas fir may not be a go-to material for drum building, but its use in guitar construction vouches for its tonal qualities. The same wood can also be found in the aforementioned San Quentin Series.

The manufacturing process involves each shell being gradually thinned down until the desired tone is found. Andrew explains that there is always a balance between achieving optimal resonance and maintaining structural integrity. In this case, the resulting shell thickness is around 11mm from the rack tom right through to the bass drum.

Peering through the bass drum port gives us a clear view of two thicker, unlathed sections within the shell – exposing the weathered and rustic exterior of the reclaimed wood. These interior bands not only showcase the unique shell material, but also function as reinforcement rings for the relatively thin stave shells – a technique that Andrew tells us is inspired by Japanese Taiko drums. While the bass drum and floor tom each feature two reinforcement bands, the snare and rack tom have just one, which run centrally around their shells.

Overall, the stave shells are finished to a very high standard and feature 45-degree bearing edges with a slight rollover to increase the contact between the head and shell. This has been implemented to make the kit a bit easier to tune, but will also result in slightly more of the shell tone being heard. The kit has been supplied to us with a full complement of Remo heads – coated Ambassadors on the toms (clear Ambassador reso), a coated Controlled Sound on the snare (Ambassador snare side reso) and a clear Powersonic bass batter with a ported Ambassador coated on the front, which features a printed REpercussion logo.

The striking high-gloss turquoise finish is yet another nod to the Western Flyer from which the kit is built – originally painted in the same colour. The colour-matched maple bass drum hoops (also made in-house) are a smart touch, although we did notice some slight imperfections in the paintwork in comparison to the stunning quality throughout the rest of the kit. The look is completed with a quotation printed on the bass drum that reads, "To be alive at all is to have scars" (from Steinbeck's novel *The Winter of Our Discontent*).

The kit is adorned with REpercussion's very own Pebble Lugs, which make their debut on this kit. Despite their maritime theme, these rounded and satisfyingly chunky chrome lugs will remain a proprietary fixture on all future builds (including the imminent Super Thin Series).

Sitting snugly between the new lugs and the shell, we can see thin black gaskets that, rather than rubber, are actually made from Somerset leather. The Pebble Lugs are 13mm tall except for the bass drum which are 21mm to accommodate the bass drum claws in the correct position.

Another special touch is the 'R' branding, which can be seen punched into tiny discs of brass, recessed flush into each shell and lacquered over with the paintwork. These have been scattered across the shells in a non-uniform manner, which we think gives a quirky edge (but this could be a point of contention if you like things 'just so').

They Say:

ANDREW JOHNSTON
FOUNDER, REPERCUSSION DRUMS

We love that you source wood from unusual places. What got you into this?
"I decided to use the kind of wood that I use because there are lots of good stave drum builders out there already – in order to separate myself from them, I looked at what I found interesting. That's all well and good, but the instrument itself has to stand up to the tone test, playability, sensitivity and overall fundamental note coming out of the heads, as well as the shell. I might have wood from John Bonham's bed, but if it makes a rubbish drum, that's no good."

Did you have any preexpectation of how this wood might sound?
"No, it's an absolute lottery! I have thrown shells away, or they've been repurposed into fruit bowls or something like that, but not very many I have to say. I pick it up and I tap it and listen to it and I think, 'Ok, that sounds like it might make a decent instrument'. So, it needs to have a tone to it as it exists, and if it hasn't got that, I'm not interested."

"ONCE AGAIN, **FIRMER STRIKES ARE REQUIRED** TO COAX THE FULL TONE FROM THE DENSE STAVE SHELL, **RESULTING IN A WARM YET FOCUSED ATTACK.**"

1 2

3

1. Brass discs
Recessed brass 'R' badges are randomly placed on each shell.

2. Boaty McBoatface
Thicker bands in the interior of the stave shell show off the original wood, reclaimed from the cabin and wheel house area of The Western Flyer.

3. Pebble Lugs
New proprietary Pebble Lugs make their debut on this kit but will become the company's standard.

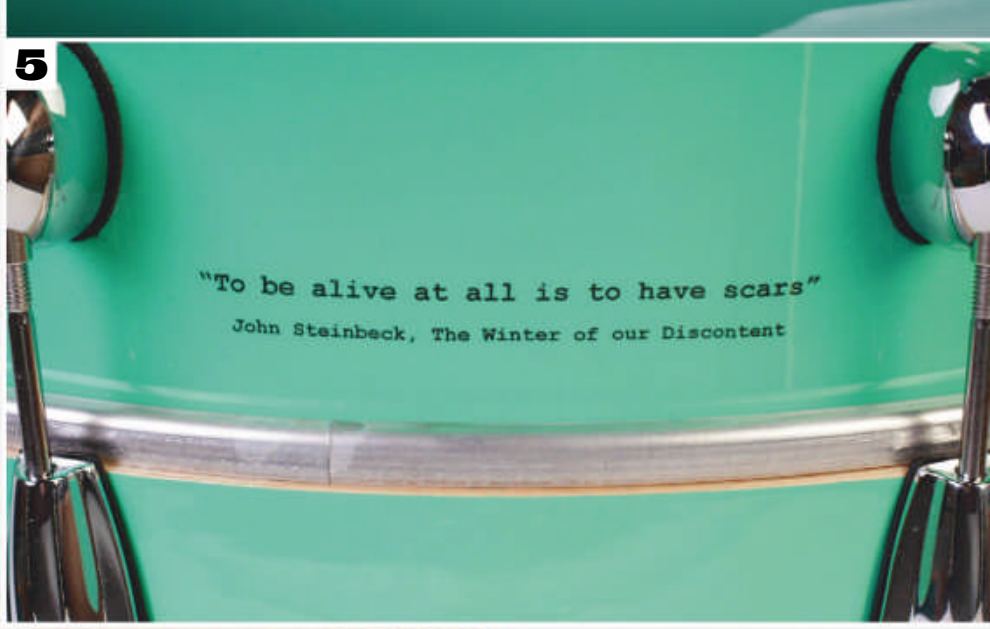
4. Seafoam Green
The high-gloss lacquer turquoise colour is matched to the colour of the original ship.

5. Light Reading
Printed on the bass drum is a Steinbeck quote from his novel *The Winter of Our Discontent*.

6. Tricked-Out
The 5 ½" snare drum features a Trick Drums throw-off.

7. Clean Edges
The perfectly cut bearing edges are 45 degree with a slight round over for ease of tuning.

4



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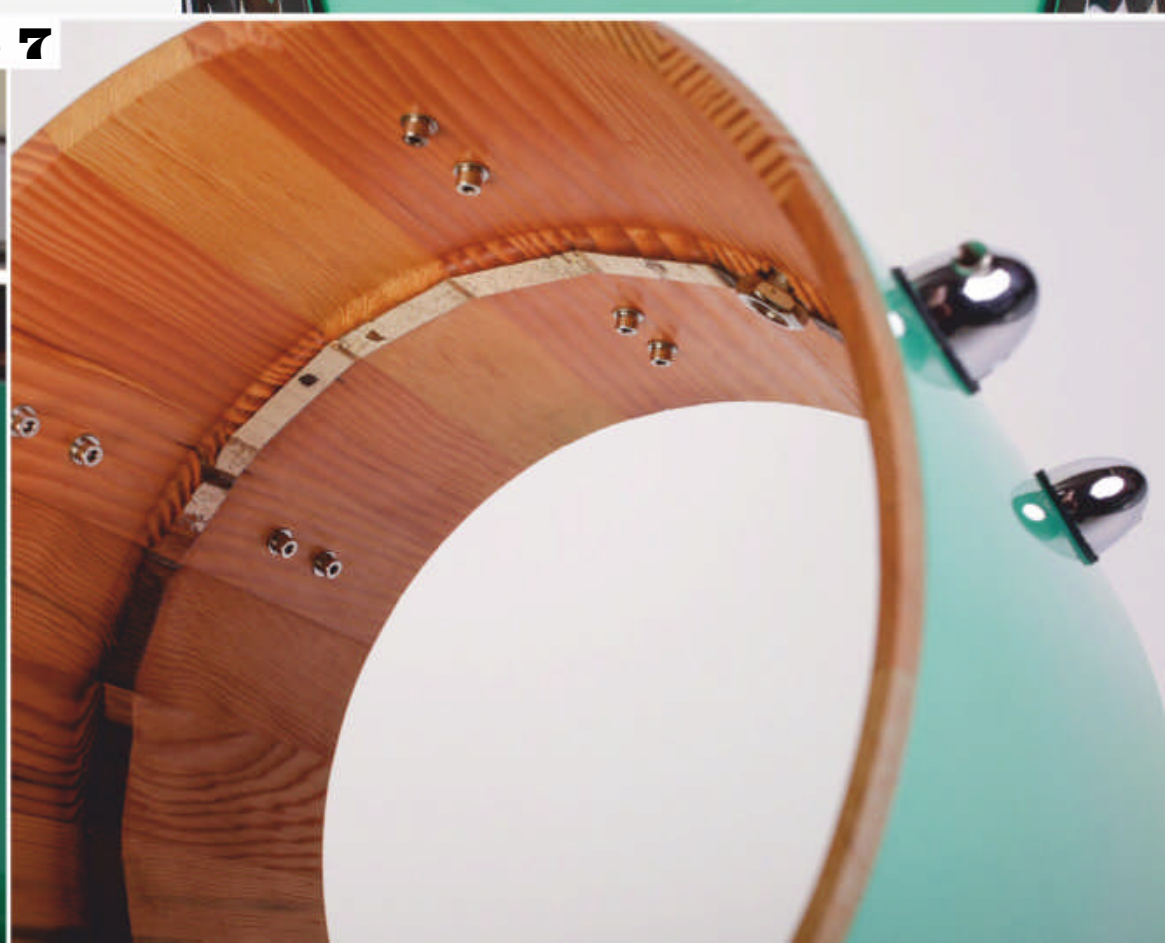


Additional shell hardware includes 3mm triple-flanged hoops and Gibraltar claws for the bass drum. The 10-lug snare features a Trick throw-off plus 24-strand Puresound brass wires. The snare beds have been cut to 2.5mm deep and 4" in length. With no mounting system currently fitted to the rack tom, we opted to use a snare stand.

Whilst checking the kit in the studio, we are suitably impressed with not only how quickly the kit tunes to the room, but also how well the stave shells work together as a set, particularly when considering the nautical origins of the donor (which apparently sank twice).

Starting with the bass drum, the heavy-duty Powersonic batter head with inbuilt dampening isn't quite enough to subdue the overtones from the mighty 22"x20" shell, which emits a mean and low-pitched grumble. A little internal dampening focuses the attack and shortens the decay to a more manageable level. It favours being tuned with minimal tension to give a fairly dry thud.

With the toms also tuned low to match, light touches are not enough to bring out the full tone of the shells. The elongated 12"x10" rack tom particularly needs a bit more persuasion before both the single-ply heads start to react together. At this point, the pure note produced gives us a taster of the clout contained within these drums. The rack does have a shorter-than-expected decay, but this is caused in part by the snare stand in which it is cradled.

The floor tom is able to breathe a little more, allowing it a longer decay. The almost-polyphonic note produced showcases the Douglas fir's ability to support a reasonable frequency range. Once again, firmer strikes are required to coax the full tone from the dense stave shell, resulting in a warm yet focused attack.

The snare, on the other hand, is beautifully sensitive, but like the others packs a real punch at high velocity. The brass wires are crisp and clean – ready for action at the lightest of strokes. The balance between the tight snap of a rimshot and the depth of body from the shell makes for an extraordinary-sounding drum. Tuned up high, it really feels like it could plough through anything you put in its way. It would work well in a funk setting, but much like the rest of the kit, the rock connotations are too strong to ignore.

CONTACT
REpercussion Drums
www.repercussiondrums.co.uk

Verdict

The attention to detail is impressive, and you can feel the love that has gone into this project. Not only is this an interesting piece of history, but it's also a mighty fine sounding drum kit.

Rhythm Rating

8/10

"THE STRIKING HIGH-GLOSS TURQUOISE FINISH IS YET ANOTHER NOD TO THE WESTERN FLYER FROM WHICH THE KIT IS BUILT – PAINTED IN THE SAME COLOUR."

Ludwig Bronze Beauty and Pewter Copper snare drums

The industry's most-revered snare drum takes on a new standard configuration, and a special limited edition snare is added to the Ludwig range

Words: **Matt Fisher**

PRICES: Bronze Beauty: from £958
Pewter Copper: from £1,305

Since 1909, Ludwig have continued to build a proud legacy in the world of drums. We have all heard them under the likes of Ginger Baker, Roger Taylor and John Bonham – but it was when Ringo Starr played them on The Ed Sullivan Show in 1964 that Ludwig became a household name for aspiring and superstar drummers alike.

A relaunched Black Beauty and a special limited edition of the Pewter Copper snare drum are two new products that have been added to the Ludwig line-up for this year. In 2019, Ludwig released the 110th anniversary 8-lug Black Beauty as a nod to its original specifications, and due to their popularity, Ludwig subsequently introduced the 8-lug model as a permanent fixture to the Black Beauty snare drum range.

The Pewter Copper snare drum is the latest edition to the Phonic family of snare drums and comes with a brand new sheen, which adds a little more sustain to the naturally dark tone of a Copper Phonic shell. This drum is from a limited production run and comes with Ludwig's new special edition badge. Two versions of the Black Beauty and the Pewter Copper snare drums are available - 14"x5" and 14"x6½". *Rhythm* was sent the deeper of both models for review.

From the moment of taking these drums out of the boxes, it is immediately clear that we're in the presence of two very special products here. Both beautifully crafted, maintaining that classic Ludwig vintage vibe but with modern overtones. Everything about these drums screams class, with the Ludwig art deco-influenced imperial lugs and the famous Ludwig logo found on the shell.

Bronze Beauty

It's fair to say that the Ludwig Black Beauty is right up there as one of the most famous snare drums in the world. The drum is featured on countless recordings and used by numerous artists all around the world due to their superb quality. This modern version certainly does not disappoint. It is dynamically sensitive, picking up every single nuance, with pinpoint definition even when playing right up to the rim. Overall, there is a warm, round metallic tone; but snappy when you need it to be with an eye-popping power on rim shots. It is soon very clear that this is a beast of a snare drum.

The snare is built with a bronze shell, eight imperial lugs and has 2.3mm triple-flanged hoops. Ludwig's modern-retro P88 throw-off and P35 butt plate, with the conventional tension rods and snare wires, make up the rest of the shell hardware. Ludwig Weather Master Medium skins top and tail the snare, with coated on the batter side and clear on the snare side. Taking the snares off, there is an immediately pleasing tone to the drum. Having tried out a few different tuning possibilities, this drum would easily be transferable to any genre, and the dynamic nature really makes it suitable for any setting.

"IT'S AN INCREDIBLY COMFORTABLE DRUM TO PLAY, AND THE LUDWIG HEADS GIVE IT AN EXTRA LAYER OF SOFTNESS THAT FEELS GREAT UNDER THE STICK."

1. The Bronze Beauty has eight imperial lugs surrounding the drum, the way it was originally designed.
2. The brushed Pewter finish gives this drum an aesthetically pleasing look.
3. The hardware is completed with Ludwig's modern-retro P88 throw-off and P35 butt plate.
4. Ludwig Weather Master heads are provided with each drum, coated on the batter side and clear on the snare side.
5. Both drums have 2.3mm triple-flanged hoops.
6. The Pewter Copper snare drum comes with the new special edition Ludwig badge.

STAR BUY

When Copper Meets Pewter

Next we move over to the Pewter. I am instantly drawn to the focused sound of the drum. Just like the Beauty, it responds with excellent sensitivity at all volumes. As a result, we don't need to play loudly on this snare to enjoy the sonic qualities, which makes it easily at home in the most delicate of settings. Playing softly, it also picks up every single nuance, whilst medium to loud strokes reveal a warm middle and a heavy dose of punch that settles very quickly.

Again, releasing the snares there are immediately pleasing overtones to the sound. It's an incredibly comfortable drum to play, and the Ludwig heads give it an extra layer of softness that feels great under the stick. This is a beautifully built drum from top to bottom, and the brushed Pewter finish gives this an aesthetically pleasing look, coupled with the striking new special edition Ludwig badge. Ten imperial lugs surround the 1.2mm shell, and the triple-flanged hoops are 2.3mm.

Both drums thrive when cranked up to a high tension, although the difference between each becomes slightly less discernible – both are highly dynamic and responsive. If pushed for a favourite, we'd have to lean toward the more-focused sound of the Pewter.

CONTACT
www.ludwig-drums.com

Verdict

Both drums come at a price, and this will put some people off, but you really are paying for that Ludwig sound and quality.
If you can afford it, these would be an excellent addition to your setup.

Rhythm Rating

9/10

Roland TD-27KV

Just another electronic drum kit on the market? Not quite. This new addition from Roland proves it has some aces up its sleeve

Words: **Mark Whitlam**

PRICE: £2,499

Roland have been leaders of innovation in electronic drum and percussion design for the past couple of decades. They have stepped up their output recently, having added many new products aimed across a range of budgets and for different performance situations. One of the latest additions to the mid-range series of virtual drum kits (V-Drums) is the TD-27KV.

In my opinion, any electronic instrument is never going to be a replacement for an acoustic one. The best electric piano in the world will never truly feel or respond like a Steinway-D grand, for example. As such, one has to make some physical and mental adjustments when performing on an electronic kit – it makes sense to think of it as an instrument in its own right. So, let's test drive the TD-27VK to gauge how it sounds and feels.

The Sounds

The new TD-27 sound module is intuitively designed in terms of navigation and personalisation of sounds, with a large LCD screen displaying visual representations of the current edit mode. It holds around 700 samples covering acoustic and electronic drums through to a myriad of percussion instruments from around the globe. Out of the gate, the default acoustic kits sound good and would be perfectly usable for practice purposes – however, it's when you start getting under the hood with this beast that you start getting some really impressive sounds.

After 15 minutes of tweaking the instantly accessible parameters for each drum – shell type (wood type, fibreglass, steel, etc), depth, tuning, head choice (coated, clear, pinstripe), type and amount of muffling (tape, doughnut, felt) – the stock sounds get closer to how I hear an acoustic kit in my mind.

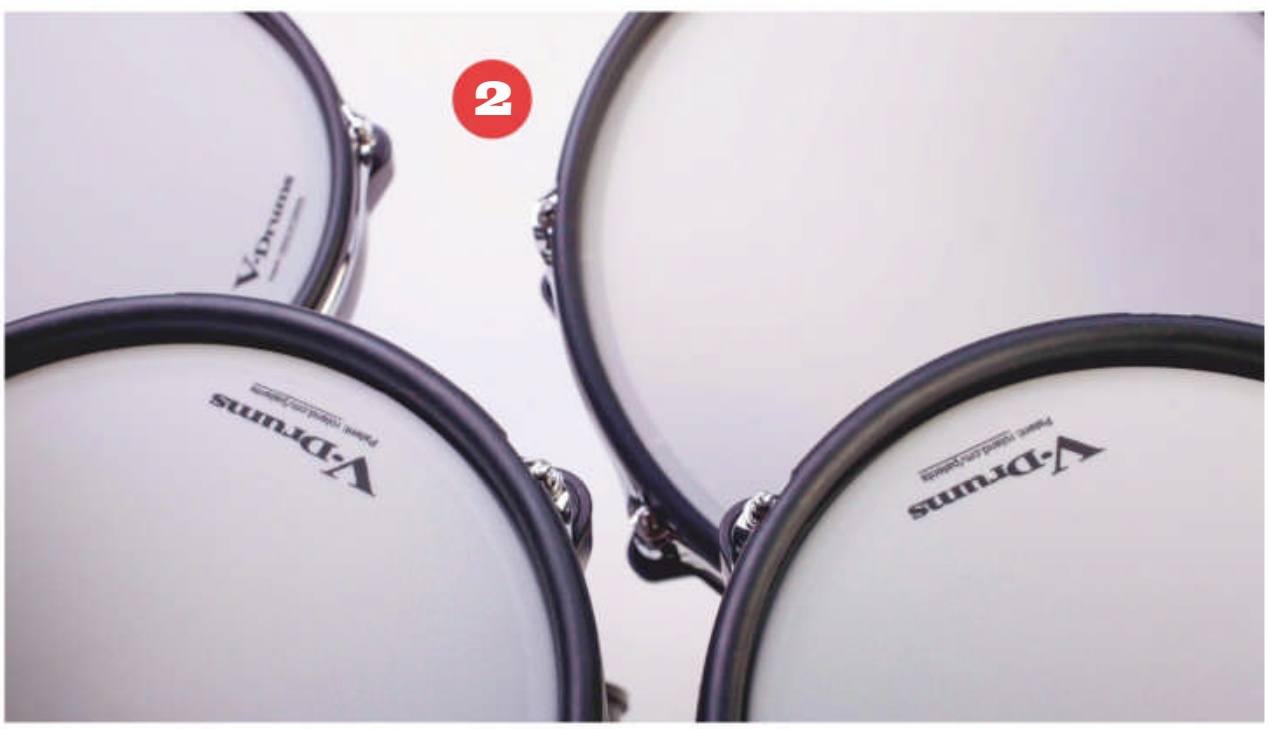
Add to that further tweaks from flexible EQ, and compression on each sound, plus the option to add different reverb spaces from small studios to massive halls (including being able to dial in different virtual overhead mics at different positions above the drum kit and the degree to which you can personalise your sound), becomes quite vast. One can layer two samples on each playing surface and gate when the second voice takes effect – so you could, for instance, have an 808 handclap layered with your snare sound, but set the threshold so that it only triggers with louder hits, leaving ghost notes to just be the acoustic snare layer. This is very savvy.

Drum Pads

The shallow, yet very sturdy, 10" tom pads feature 2-ply mesh heads that can be tensioned to respond closer to an expected tom feel and your desired tuning. They have plenty of rebound and feature rims that can be assigned different samples to the head, providing extra flexibility of sound without the need for extra pads. The low-profile bass drum pad has a decent feel to it with none of the 'hitting a brick wall' feel some cheaper options on the market present. The full-size 14" snare pad is quite something; it is chunky, metallic plated and actually looks a lot like a modern stainless-steel snare drum. This is one of the two 'digital' pads (along with the ride cymbal) that uses USB-style connections to the sound module – previously only compatible with the flagship TD-50.

We're extremely impressed by not only how realistic the physical response is of the head, but also the accuracy and breadth of

"THE INTUITIVELY DESIGNED CONTROLS ALLOW FOR QUICK ADJUSTMENT OF THE MOST USEFUL PARAMETERS: PAD VOLUME, INSTRUMENT SELECTION, TUNING AND MUFFLING ON THE FLY VIA FOUR GLOWING KNOBS."



dynamics in the triggering of sounds. This is about as real as it gets right now; you've got the more-expected features, such as rim shot and cross-stick functionality, but now playing near the edge of the head gives you a different tonal response. Drum rolls are usually the Achilles heel of e-drums, however this pad and sound module combination is quite astonishingly accurate. This is a massive step forward and really marks out Roland's attention to detail compared to rival manufacturers.

Cymbal Pads

Roland have upped the game by providing an 18" ride cymbal with semi-flexible edges. This larger playing surface feels much more realistic, with multiple playing zones

and allows damping with fingertips on top of the cymbal. The feel is fairly close to a medium to heavy weight cymbal and has some give when crashed on the edge. The smaller 12" crashes feel fairly chunky when played and less like acoustic cymbals, which are much thinner-feeling under the stick. They do however, respond well at different dynamic levels and can also be choked by grabbing the edge of the pad. The hi-hat pad functionality is pretty impressive with several degrees of open control and feels quite satisfying to play, but you'll need your own stand.

CONTACT
Roland (UK) Ltd
www.roland.com/uk

1. Clear and bright LCD screen displays very logical info making navigation of settings and menus very intuitive.
2. The full size 14" snare pad gives the most realistic playing experience and sonic nuances we've ever come across.
3. Sturdy tubular rack design with boom cymbal stands provides strong support for the pads and folds down flat for storage or transport. You'll need to supply your own bass drum pedal, hi-hat and snare stand.
4. Large 18" diameter ride cymbal provides a more realistic playing experience and greater accuracy in moving from different sound zones on the pad.
5. The 700 sounds from around the globe on board the module are a great starting point and can be highly personalised when digging into the multitude of sound-editing options.
6. Stand-alone bass drum pad provides a more acoustic pedal response than most other competitor companies.

Verdict

This is a very impressive mid-range kit with some high-end functionality. Prominent points are the excellent response of the digital snare and the flexibility of sound editing.

Rhythm Rating

7/10

Toontrack
The Rooms of Hansa SDX

A versatile sample library recorded in the legendary Berlin studio

Words: **Tom Bradley**

PRICE: £129

As electronic drumming creeps ever closer to recreating the experience of the real thing, Toontrack's Superior Drummer software continues to pave the way by producing high-quality samples from the world's top studios – all accessed through an incredibly powerful user interface for sequencing or recording via MIDI.

The Rooms of Hansa SDX is the latest add-on pack for Superior Drummer 3 and features six complete kits recorded across four rooms of the legendary Berlin studios. The man behind the mixing desk for this 121 GB extravaganza is Michael Ilbert whose impressive list of credits includes work with Adele, Katy Perry, Pink and Muse.

The Marble Room, The Meistersaal, The Vocal Booth and The Live Room each have their own distinct acoustic character; painstakingly captured by Ilbert and the Toontrack team. There are a total of 81 presets out of the box, which range from reverb-soaked and octaban-laden behemoths, to more modest, natural and dampened four-piece kits.

1. A-listers galore Michael Ilbert's impressive list of credits includes work with Adele, Katy Perry and Muse.

2. Plenty of room Experience The Marble Room, The Meistersaal, The Vocal Booth and The Live Room of Hansa Studios.

3. Diverse presets 81 different presets include drums from Mashhoff Drums, Wahan Drums and Sugar Percussion.

4. Rounding it out Octabans and roto toms make a welcome addition to the six kits in the pack.

The kit selection includes a Mashhoff Drums Maple Twin Shell, Wahan Supreme Classic Acrylic and Sugar Percussion Mahogany Stave kits, in addition to a range of vintage '60s and '70s drums.

We start by spending some time checking out the collection of pre-saved grooves and fills. With a nod towards some of the classic albums recorded at Hansa, these could be particularly useful for non-drumming producers in creating a solid foundation for their tracks.

For us though, the magic really begins when our e-kit is hooked up to the laptop. (Those familiar with SD3 will already know that setting up the kit as an external MIDI instrument is as simple as connecting a USB cable and selecting the make and model from a drop-down menu.) Rigged up with a Porter & Davies system, along with a decent pair of headphones, this is truly a jaw-dropping e-drumming experience.

The presets alone are more than enough to keep us occupied for the foreseeable future, though delving into the mixer window reveals the sheer depth of this software. For instance, the large Meistersaal concert hall setup uses a whopping 29 microphones – ranging from three bass drum positions to full surround sound ambient mics. Close your eyes and it's like being there.

CONTACT
www.timespace.com

Verdict

This versatile sample pack makes a fantastic addition to Superior Drummer 3. Whether it's rock, pop or funk flavours you're after, The Rooms of Hansa have got you covered.

Rhythm Rating

10/10

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Beats working

Every drummer needs Rhythm. Exclusive lessons from our expert team...

Welcome to Beats Working, the part of the magazine aimed at helping drummers of all abilities to develop and progress. Kicking things off this issue is the familiar trio of Colin Woolway, Erik Stams and myself, all looking at ways of incorporating the bass drum into fills in 'Getting Started', 'Creative Concepts' and 'Technical Difficulties', respectively.

Next, in 'Six-Stroke Motions', Jason Bowld explores some fluid fills to spice up your vocabulary, while in 'Percussion Toolbox', all-round percussion guru Pete Lockett turns his attention to the triangle, with some essential patterns that can be used to add sparkle and life to any drum track.

In 'So, You Want To Play Hybrid', Tom Bradley turns his attention to creating and playing with loops, whilst in his 'drum lesson without picking up the sticks', Mike Sturgis looks at the importance of embracing new ideas and being present with the process with a 'growth' mindset.

And finally, as part of our Neil Peart tribute, our two play-along tracks are the Rush classics 'Tom Sawyer' and 'The Spirit Of Radio'. And here you'll find both pieces broken down, with key elements demonstrated, ready for you to play along to the 'minus drums' version of the tracks. Enjoy!

Pete Riley, Beats Working Editor

Introducing our expert tutors (and the best thing they've done during lockdown)

PETE RILEY

In his 35 years of playing, Pete has recorded and toured with a wide range of artists from Guthrie Govan to Keith Emerson (ELP). He's also been active in the world of education for many years, started writing for *Rhythm* in '93, has been teaching at ACM for some 21 years and more recently at WaterBear in Brighton.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

"Finally having time to master the 5/4 time playing and soloing in John Riley's *Jazz Drummer's Workshop* book, after only owning it for 15 years!"

JASON BOWLD

Jase has been the drummer for Welsh rock/metal titans Bullet For My Valentine since 2015. He began drumming aged 12 and turned professional at 21. He joined UK industrial legends Pitchshifter from 1999 to 2007, during which time his session drumming career took shape. He's played with Killing Joke, Pop Will Eat Itself, Fightstar and even Bill Bailey.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

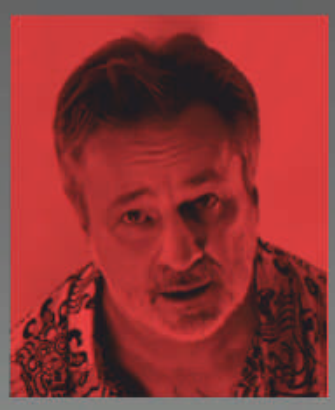
"Writing three completely different albums, and honing my drumming skills!"

ERIK STAMS

Born and raised in NYC, Erik has over 20 years of performing, recording, television, film and teaching experience. He's performed and recorded with artists including Jamie Lawson, Zervas and Pepper, Butch Thomas, Jon Langford, The Glyndebourne Touring Opera and The Darling Buds. He is head of drums at BIMM London.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

"Definitely recording from home! I have been recording drum tracks for three different bands and even some guitar, bass and vocal ideas of my own."

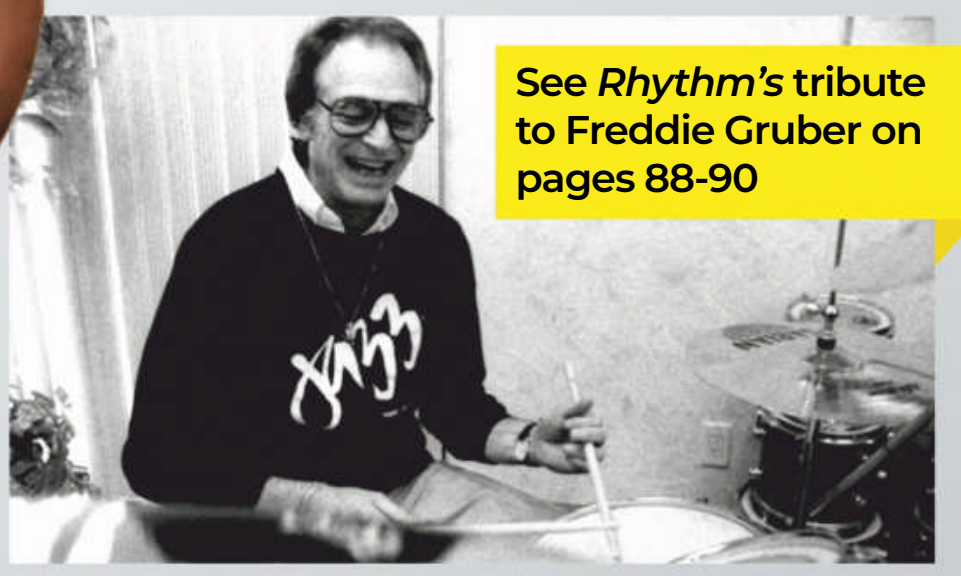


PETE LOCKETT

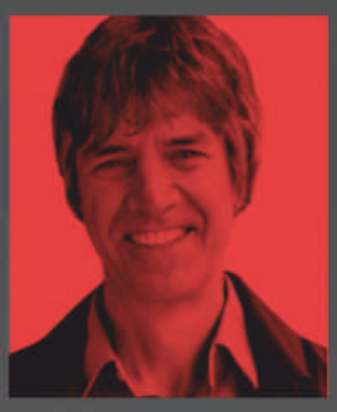
Pete is one of the most versatile multi-percussionists on the planet and has played a dizzying range of instruments with artists including Björk, Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, Michael Nyman, and the Pet Shop Boys; and on a plethora of Hollywood films. He continues to tour worldwide as a soloist, collaborator and educator.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

"Luckily, I could get some focused time to properly develop the Lockett-Vettese Band livestream material and spend a lot of time with loopers and electronics to really delve deep into those possibilities. And, of course, cook LOTS!"



See *Rhythm's* tribute to Freddie Gruber on pages 88-90



MIKE STURGIS

A 15-year veteran of writing for *Rhythm* magazine, Mike has appeared live and on record with artists including A-ha, Steve Winwood, Jack Bruce, David Bowie, Elton John, Tom Jones, Bob James, Asia, Beverly Knight and many more. He plays with Redtenbacher's Funkestra and The Staks and is head of education for DIME Online.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

"Musically, I've been keeping busy doing remote sessions with Redtenbacher's Funkestra. These can be seen on YouTube under the heading of *The Masterlink Sessions*."

COLIN WOOLWAY

Colin has been playing and teaching drums professionally since 1976. He has done every kind of gig including eight years with rock icon Suzi Quatro. He is the founder of the Drumsense teaching programme and has written for *Rhythm* for over 20 years! Colin teaches at studios in Twickenham, The Brit School and ELAM.

THE BEST THING I'VE DONE DURING LOCKDOWN?

"I used some spare time to re-organise my teaching studio, including bringing in a new desk and optimising the space... Much better! Also, because so many lessons were online on a practice pad, my technique improved!"

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For the featured tuition videos go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Getting Started

Time to kick back and let **Colin Woolway** guide you through adding the bass drum to your fills

Welcome to my latest 'Getting Started' lesson, this time looking at using the bass drum in your fills.

Ex 1 shows groups of three in triplets with the hands alternating right and left and the bass drum played as the last note. Take care to play slowly and get the notes nice and even; try moving the triplets around the kit or splitting your hands between snare drum and high tom.

Ex 2 is the same idea, but in groups of four, alternating hands with the bass drum as the last note. This sounds great played "down" the kit, right hand starting on the snare, left hand on high tom, then third note right hand on the floor tom.

Ex 3 is a very cool combination of threes and fours, in a 3/3/3/3/4 format. This will make a super fill!

Finally, try playing groups of four but with two bass notes as in Ex 4. If you play this as a fill, you will have to compensate somehow at the end so as not to have to play three bass notes when you hit the crash cymbal.

■ Check my video on the *Rhythm* YouTube channel to see how I roll out of the fill.

For Colin's video lesson go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

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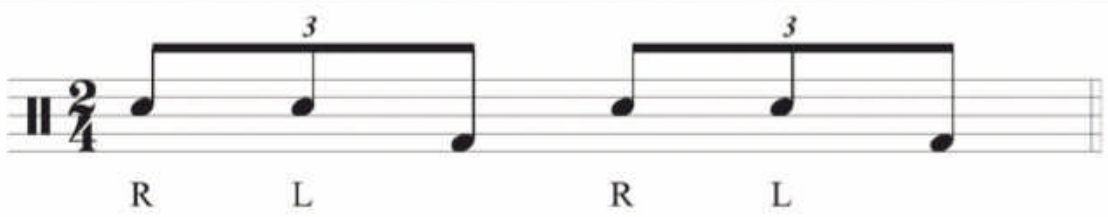

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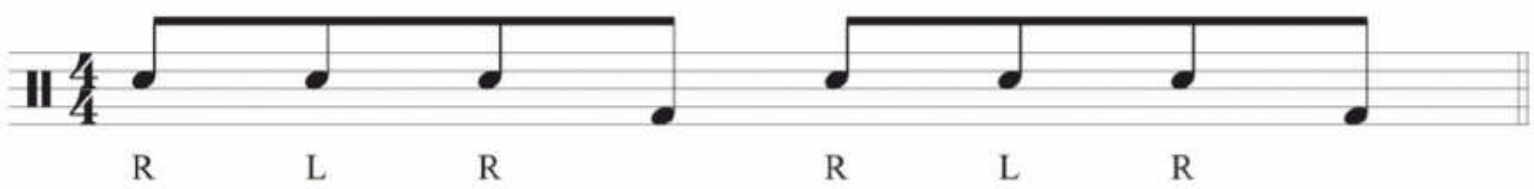
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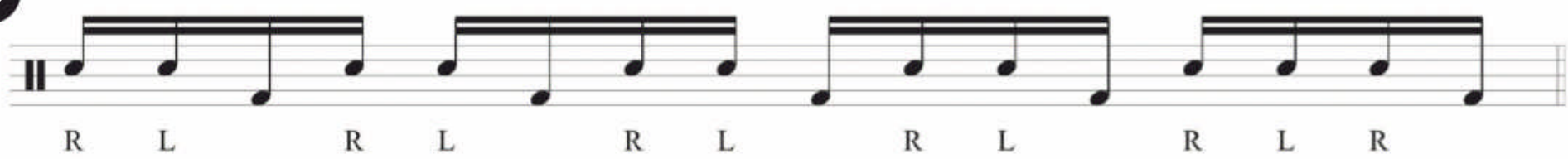
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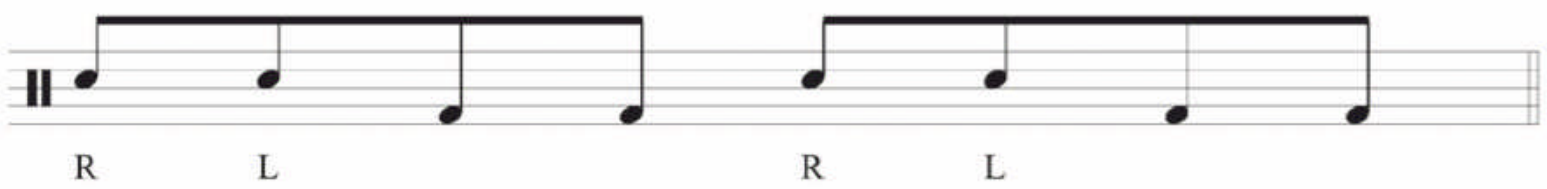

Creative Concepts

Erik Stams dives in deep to explore creating melodic, bass drum-loaded fills

Welcome back! This month, we will be exploring the inclusion of the bass drum in our phrasing to create more melodic and syncopated fills.

Playing rhythms on the drum kit one voice at a time is often referred to as *linear phrasing*. It's comparable to the harmonic difference between a chord and an arpeggio. A chord is produced on the piano (for instance) by playing several notes simultaneously. An arpeggio is produced by playing notes sequentially, or one note at a time.

On the drums, this concept can be used to create both grooves and fills. Check out Dennis Chambers, Nate Smith, Mark Guiliana, John Bonham, Max Roach, Anika Nilles and Vinnie Colaiuta to hear linear phrasing in action.

As always, the first step with learning or practicing a new concept is to analyse the concept and practice it slowly, preferably with a metronome – 70bpm is a good starting tempo. All of the exercises below are written as 16th notes (semiquavers). Maintain single-stroke motion throughout (R-L-R-L) and simply substitute a bass drum note where indicated.

For Erik's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Ex 1 illustrates the substitution of a single bass drum note in four different placements within a 16th-note sequence. Count "1-e-&-a" and practice substituting each note in the phrase as a separate exercise. Ex 2 shows the same concept articulated with two bass drum notes. Make sure that all of the notes are evenly spaced.

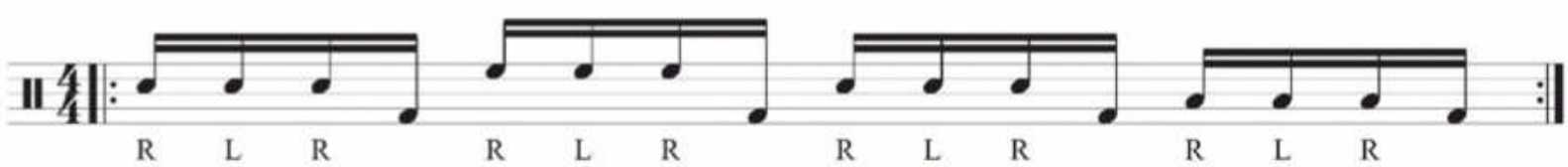
Ex 3 introduces the concept of orchestration around the drum kit. Move the entire phrase from drum to drum in a parallel fashion. Exs 4 and 5 illustrate each note being played on a different drum, creating more melody within the phrase. Again, ensure that each note is given equal value and that you maintain good posture and balance. Ex 6 shows how each of the previous phrases can be used as a drum fill in context with a groove.

1

Four bass drum placements. Maintain R-L-R-L single-stroke motion throughout.

2

Two bass drum notes.

3

Orchestration. Explore all previous placements.

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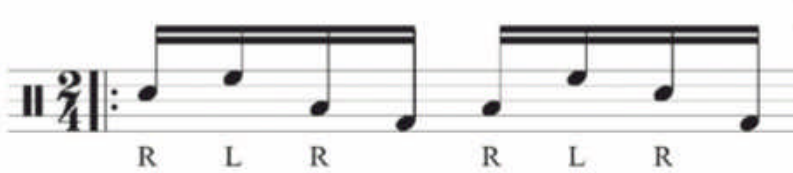
Each note on a different drum. Explore all placements.

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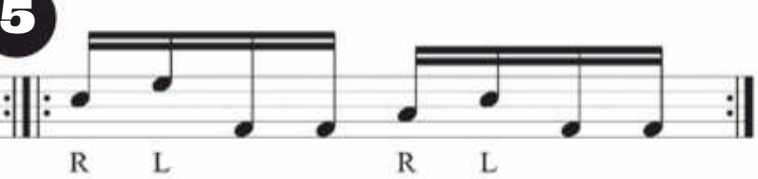
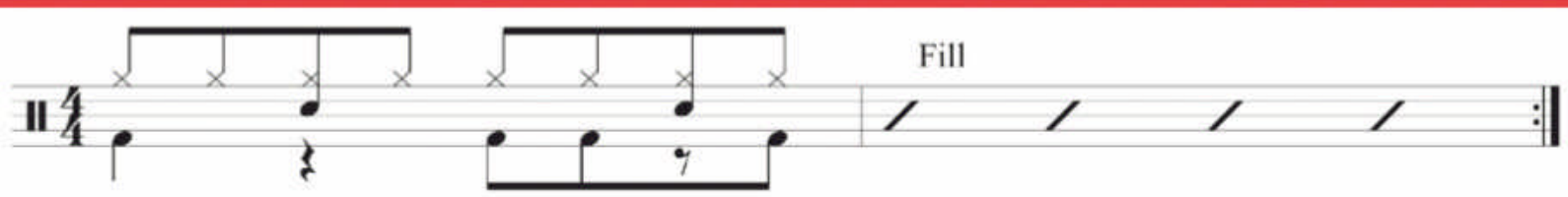

Each note on a different drum. Explore all placements.

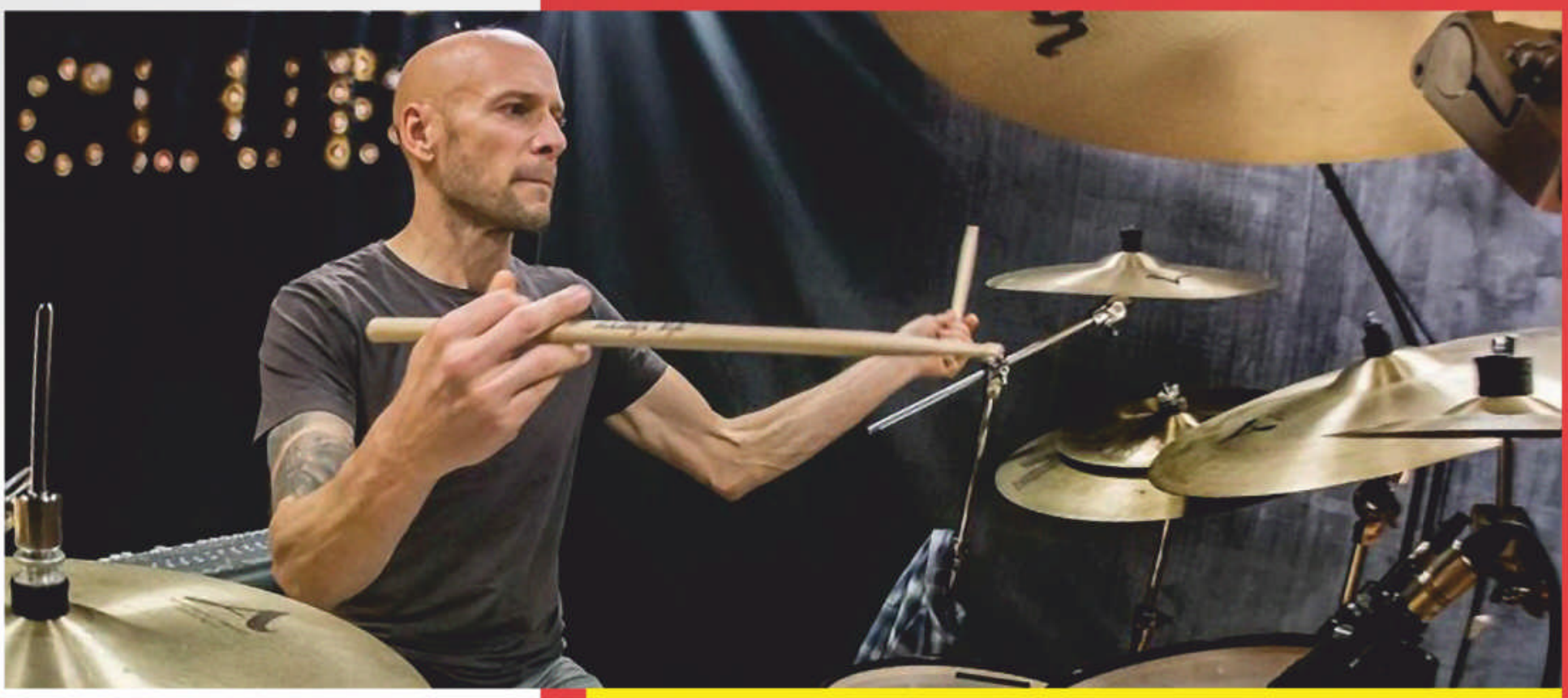
6



In context with a groove.

Technical Difficulties

Incorporating the bass drum with **Pete Riley**



Developing the ability to use the bass drum within fills can transform the palette of ideas a drummer has to choose from. Most drummers starting out tend to use single strokes around the kit, but this can ultimately sound one dimensional. Alternatively, using the bass drum to break up the flow of notes can allow the hands to more easily move to different drums as well as create more syncopated and interesting phrases.

Ex 1 shows a R-L-foot combination using 16th notes. The right hand can move around the kit while the left remains on the snare. To be most effective, the left-hand notes on the snare should be played as ghost notes. In Ex 2, the original three-note figure expands to a five-note figure: R-L-R-L-foot.

In Exs 3 and 4, they are changed to a triplet rate, still covering three and five beats, respectively, with the left hand filling in all of the missing triplets. Ex 5 combines two notes with the bass drum and two notes with the hands, but plays it through a 16th-note triplet rate. Notice also how this starts with the bass drum as opposed to the hands.

Ex 6 shows an effective linear hand-foot phrase sometimes referred to as the 'Weckl 9' after Dave Weckl. One of the challenges with this phrase is the two different placements of the double-stroke within the triplets on the bass drum. The next is making sure that the double left played on the snare is ghosted.

For a challenge, try splashing the hi-hat on the quarter-notes.

For Pete's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

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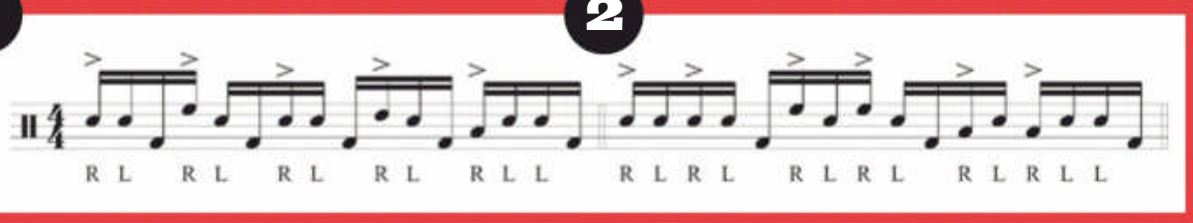
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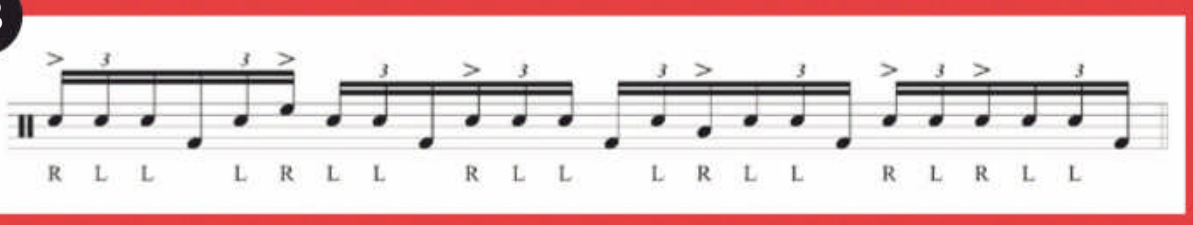
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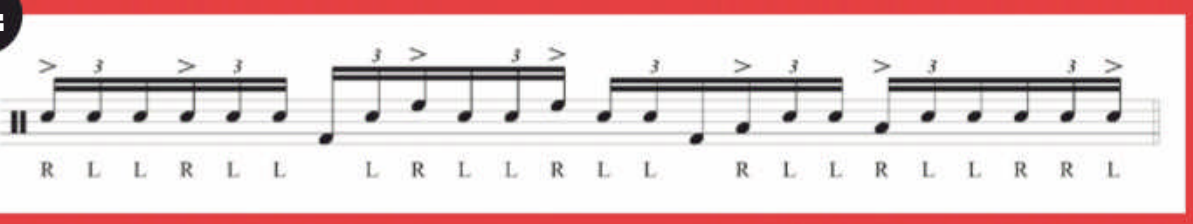
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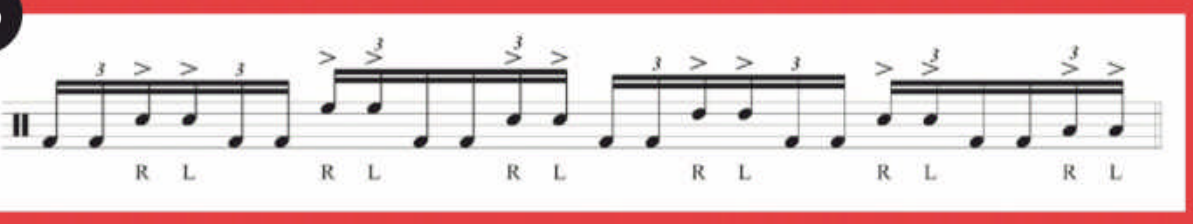

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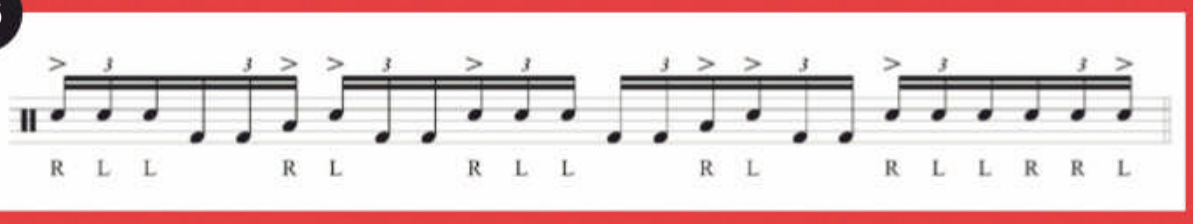
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Six-stroke motion fills

Jason Bowld shows you how to move easily around your kit with these fluid fills

Image: Ryan Chang

For Jason's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Moving fluidly around the kit is obviously an important part of drumming – we shouldn't be restrained to just descending on it with single strokes! Using six-stroke rolls, we can reserve energy and create some interesting motions, such as side to side or up and down.

Example 1 uses the six-stroke roll played in 16th-note triplets. In the accompanying video, I'm using an auxiliary snare in the first fill. This is optional, and if you don't have one, you can focus on the second fill which utilises the more-traditional four-piece setup.

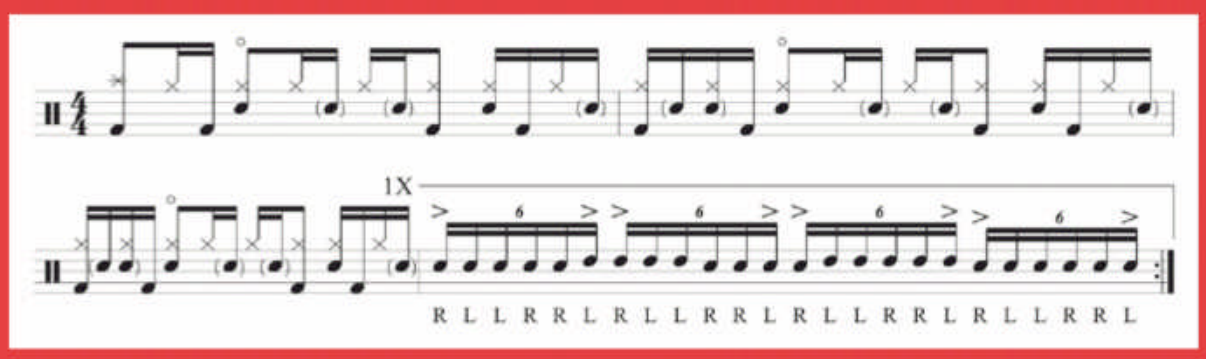
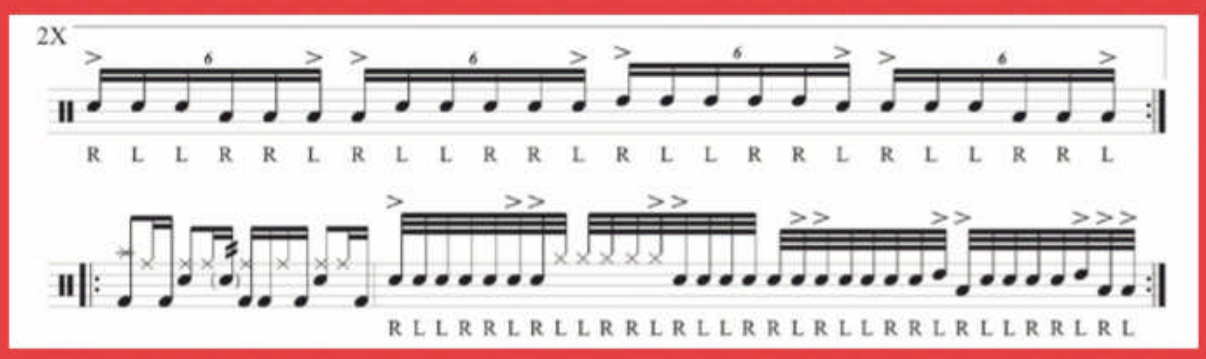
Preceded by one bar of groove, Ex 2 shows five six-stroke rolls played as 32nd notes. Here, the hi-hats are used for a different texture as well as the snare, rack and floor toms.

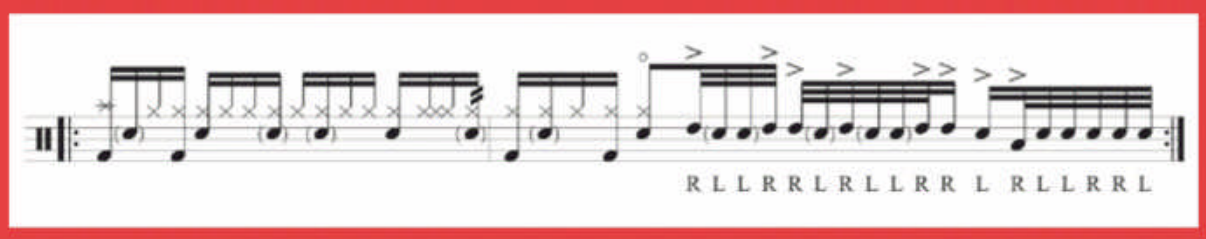
Wrapping things up in Ex 3, again, 32nd notes are used in the fill, but not continuously. Comprising three six-stroke rolls, there is a 16th-note break for the backbeat on beat 4 before the fill ends with the last roll – similar to my lesson in Issue 296 in the respect that the backbeat is present, retaining a sense of groove.

Heads up

Reserve Energy

The fact that six-stroke rolls use a combination of doubles and singles gives you a sense of having more time to 'travel' with the arms between drums. This makes them a great rudiment to use for motion fills. Why not try other rudiments to create your own motions?

1 Whilst focusing on the movement between the drums, try to keep the accents true within the six-stroke rolls. The power you put into these will generate momentum and help in travelling around the kit.

2 Changing to 32nd notes in this fill, again, the accents you play on the snare travelling toward the hi-hat will help with the movement. An additional challenge, which will help with your timing, is to pedal eighth-note hi-hats throughout the fill.

3 A different twist on the last two fills, where, here, the right hand is fully accented on the rack tom to create a punchy pattern, whilst the left hand ghosts on the snare. The final six-stroke roll has a more regular feel, which plays after the backbeat on '4-e'.



Percussion Toolbox

Don't be obtuse! Learn to love the triangle – **Pete Lockett** shows you why you should

It may be the subject of unwanted jokes, but this instrument has such a penetrating tone and is so exposed that playing it well is a lot more important than is popularly thought. They that jest are themselves proved foolish!

The triangle dates back to at least the 1400s as a musical instrument and is simply a metal bar bent into a triangle shape (originally without a gap and with round metal rings added that created a buzzing effect).

It was introduced into western orchestral music in the 1700s when a Turkish-themed section was added. This would also have been the time where cymbals became more prominent in this setting – both have remained mainstays of the orchestral percussion section. Much later on, the triangle became a vital part of world music, particularly in samba sections from Brazil. From here, it was also employed as part of the contemporary pop and rock percussionists' ever-expanding setup.

This has led to two distinctly different approaches to playing the instrument. The orchestral style involves suspending the instrument from a clip with hoops of nylon thread. This clip can be attached to a stand or held in the weaker hand of the player. It is then struck by a metal beater on the bottom inside bar whilst being muted and unmuted with the holding hand. This muting technique is a lot less extreme than the samba style muting and often leaves some resonant harmonics.

The samba style is completely different to the orchestral. Firstly, a clip and/or nylon thread is rarely used. Instead the instrument hangs gently on the finger of the weaker hand as in Ex 1 (all examples can be found on page 84).

1 TRIANGLE HOLDING HAND

Only part of the first finger touches the instrument for the open tone. See how the thumb and 2/3/4 fingers of the left hand are held away completely. You can see also that the arm is held out horizontal in a relaxed manner. It is very important that there is no tension in the arm.

BEATER LOCKETT

It must be noted that there are various options regarding striking and beating the instrument. Firstly, classical players nearly always play inside the instrument, with the beater in the middle of the triangle striking the bottom bar and the angled bar above it. Also, in samba and 'pop' style, many players play inside the instrument in this manner to enable them to get fast sixteenth notes and rolls. See Ex 2 for this position.

2 INTERNAL STRIKING

3 EXTERNAL STRIKING

I prefer to play on the outside of the triangle as in Ex 3. This enables me to get more power and to play eighth note patterns more accurately. Then, I switch to the internal playing position for rolls and any continuous 16th-note patterns. We will look at the internal playing method in a future series, but for now, I am going to focus solely on the external playing position and slower rate patterns.

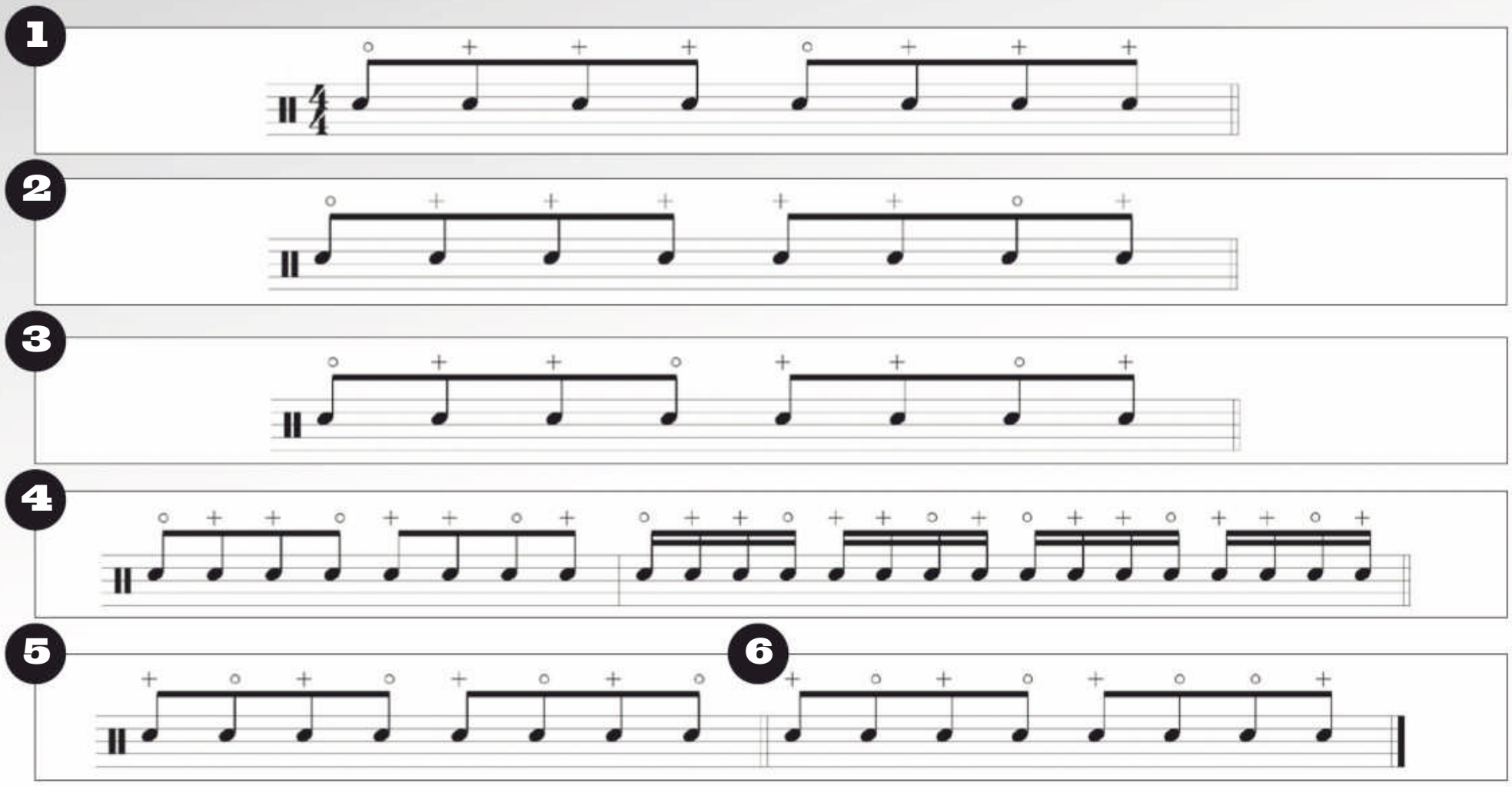
Before we go onto the patterns, let's quickly look at the muting technique with the holding hand. From the open position of the thumb and fingers in Ex 1, wrap your fingers inside and place your thumb on top as in Ex 4. Practice going between these two positions before you strike the instrument.

For Pete's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

4 WEAKER HAND MUFFLE

An additional note as well seen in the pics. I have the gap of the triangle towards my left side. This is for when I play internally on the right of the instrument so there is no gap there. Next, as in Exs 3 & 5, we strike the outside of the instrument in both the muted and unmuted guises.

5 STRIKING MUTED

The arm movement is minimal, and there is a little wrist and finger movement in striking the beater on the instrument. The grip is relaxed and there should be no tension in the arm. The beater strikes at a right angle to the outside rod and is removed immediately away. The tone should ring clearly for the open tone and be muffled for the closed one. It's as simple as that. For some easy exercises using these two tones, take a look at my videos on the *Rhythm* YouTube channel.

NEXT TIME: We will look at adding the 'Grab' muted stroke as an individual note in its own right, as well as triangle sizes, beater sizes, tone, striking nearer the corner or middle and other varieties of 'triangularesque' instruments. Happy.

Why Live Performance Matters...

In October, Pete Lockett's improvisational new project, the Lockett-Vettese Band, presented a livestream from Lighthouse, Poole. The event – the first in a planned series of 'Behind Closed Doors' from executive producer, Paul Cameron – also featured an exclusive interview with legendary drummer Bill Bruford.

Here, Pete tells *Rhythm* why it's so important for artists to be able to keep performing during these uncertain times:

"Covid-19 has affected so many people in our industry in so many unimaginable ways. For some, their whole financial stability has been crushed – not just here in Great Britain, but all around the world. People that go from tour to tour, or rely on a big mix of regular gigs, have been hit the hardest. For these people, the importance of being able to keep performing is literally life or death and makes any comments I might make here about the more esoteric side of things altogether insignificant.

"It's also important to think about the creative, inner side of things as well, though. I think of it more in terms of, 'How important is it to keep 'creating' during these times?' The creative process, for me, is the engine room of the whole thing, and without that, the whole desire to perform would be transformed into mere functionality. If we can keep engaged with our art and continue to find some connection with it, we will feel a lot more connected to our inner being.

"One of the dangers of not performing live is that we run the risk of neglecting that connection and letting that side of what we do fall into disrepair. As musicians, a lot of our 'expression' involves a relationship with the listener, and the feedback cycle that that happens between a live audience and the performer. This becomes the platform for our creativity. Without that, though, we have to find other ways to keep that flame burning, and internalising and finding a positive way to keep creative is vitally important for our artistic self.

"It seems like a dream for me now to imagine being back in front of a live audience. That is our lifeblood and a huge part of our inspiration. In the meantime, though, we have to find different methods and different outlets to at least keep the wolves from the door. We have to create different opportunities and think outside the box.

"To me, one very important aspect of that is the digital realm, but the question is: How much of the physical experience can we recreate in this format? That's the question we are grappling with in Lockett-Vettese band. Getting back into a working environment and expending all the energies in developing the final performance.

"The positive thought and intent is there, and we will do all we can to push as much of that into our livestreams as possible. Pushing forward with positivity and optimism... It's all we can do right now."

So, You Want to Play Hybrid?

Enter the exciting world of live-looping with these simple steps says **Tom Bradley**

As hybrid drummers we have the potential to control a multitude of musical parts with just the simple tap of a pad. In this session, we'll be diving into our settings, tweaking a few parameters and generally getting to grips with looping samples. Loops not only make for endless fun but also unlock a world of possibility when it comes to playing live or even practicing.

The Right Gear For The Job

In terms of hardware, using a dedicated sample pad, such as the Roland SPD-SX, offers the advantage of being able to organise various samples across a selection of small pads, rather than requiring a separate pad or trigger for each one. If you're still just dipping a toe into the hybrid pool and not quite ready to splash out on any new gear, it's worth noting that most current e-kits and hybrid modules also share the following basic capabilities.

The Techie Bit

An imported sample will respond by default as a *one-shot*, which will play just once each time the relevant pad is struck. This setting is often better suited to short sounds like percussion instruments or sub-drops, and it's how we've used our samples up until now. When programmed as a *loop*, the sound will be played over and over again, indefinitely. Usually when setting a sample as a loop, it's a good idea to turn on the 'ALT' function. This essentially makes the pad act as an on/off switch – meaning, the first hit will start the sample from the beginning and the second will stop it. Otherwise, each hit will start the loop again and you'll have no way to stop it.

Another important setting to consider is the control of *dynamics*. When on (usually by default), this means that your sample's playback volume will be governed by how hard the pad is struck (again, ideal for something like percussion). Turning the dynamics off is incredibly useful, particularly when using loops or full tracks, as it ensures the sample is always heard at a consistent volume. This is also a great trick when using things like electronic kick or snare sounds assigned to drum triggers.

Lastly, we'll finish with a slightly more involved function of the sample pad: *mute groups*. This allows pads to be categorised so that when a new sample is triggered, it will cancel out any others within the same mute group. This can be used to great effect if, for instance, we placed bass lines in group one, guitar parts in group two and keyboard parts in group three. This would allow all three instruments to play at once but only one part for each.

The Proof Is In The Pudding

There are no specific exercises to try out for this one, so, instead, your challenge is to find some loops (there are plenty of free ones to be found online) and put the above ideas into practice. Don't forget to check out the accompanying video for helpful demonstrations.

Watch Tom's lesson now at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

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WHY MASTER MUSICIANS SHOULD STRIVE FOR A BEGINNER'S MIND

Mike Sturgis explores the importance of having a 'growth mindset' as exemplified by Neil Peart

When you think of Neil Peart and his contribution to music, you could arguably sum it up with one word: excellence. In fact, the pursuit of excellence is something that he described as being "my life's tangent".

Not a man to rest on his laurels, he continually pushed the envelope with regards to improving his ability and knowledge. And while this manifested most famously in the iconic music of his band, Rush, it's well known that this mindset was applied to more than one musical environment.

On his continual journey to become a better drummer, it is clear that Peart approached this with what Zen master Shenryu Suzuki called 'beginner's mind'. Listen to any interview with Peart and you'll quickly get a sense of his almost child-like enthusiasm for music, culture, art and literature.

So, while we will always be inspired and grateful for his musical legacy, perhaps the most important lesson this great man has given us might be how to approach lifelong learning.

Fixed Mindset vs Growth Mindset

In order to learn, you need to put yourself into a mindset that enables this to happen. Specifically, you need to believe that, whatever your previous background, education or achievements, your abilities and intellect are not static. In fact, they can be changed in ways that are meaningful, if not profound.

Psychologist and researcher Carol S. Dweck is credited with creating the contrasting terms of *fixed mindset* and *growth mindset*. The fixed mindset maintains the belief that our intelligence and creative abilities cannot be modified – you are born with an allocation in these areas that cannot be changed, and success is the only measurement of being smart or skilled.

Conversely, the growth mindset embraces the conclusions of neuroscience that the brain (and all its neural connectivity) is malleable and that our fundamental levels of skill, creativity and intelligence are all changeable through consistent, incremental gains. It is this mindset that embraces challenge and does not associate failure with unintelligence, but rather an opportunity for growth.

Neil Peart embodied growth mindset. Before embarking on the legendary *Burning for Buddy* project in 2007, he began to study with jazz legend Peter Erskine to improve his big band drumming. When he did so, he described the experience as "feeling like a 13-year old again". He knew that big band drumming was an area that was out of his comfort zone and that expectations would be high regarding his performance. Therefore, he put aside his previous achievements, embraced the challenge with enthusiasm and grew exponentially in his ability.

Images: David Leisser

See *Rhythm's* tribute to Freddie Gruber on pages 88-90

Commitment and Resilience

While enthusiasm and self-belief are essential when it comes to learning, Peart also knew that there is no substitute for being fully committed and present with the process. This unwavering dedication to the pursuit of excellence was further evidenced as he studied with the great Freddie Gruber.

A teacher to drumming icons such as Steve Smith and Dave Weckl, Gruber deconstructed the physical aspects of drumming and applied these concepts in ways that helped his students with their specific goals. As Peart put it, Gruber "teaches you to dance on the drums".

And while the prospect of unleashing new potential in his playing was tantalising, he knew that a sustained period of hard work and self-discipline would be required

“IN THE BEGINNER’S MIND THERE ARE MANY POSSIBILITIES, BUT IN THE EXPERT’S THERE ARE FEW.” – SHENRYU SUZUKI

to achieve his goals. After considering whether he could commit fully to this journey, he resolved that the outcome, as well as the process itself, justified the time, cost and effort required.

This type of mindset resonates with that of world chess and Tai Chi Chuan champion Josh Waitzkin, who noted that, “mental resilience is arguably the most critical trait of a world-class performer, and it should be nurtured continuously”.

In Conclusion

While he will always be remembered as someone who inspired and influenced countless drummers and irrefutably helped define the genre of progressive rock, Neil Peart also leaves us with a legacy of how to learn and live life to the fullest.

In fact, he showed us how these two parallel objectives are inextricably linked. His commitment to excellence and sense of responsibility to his fans are summed up well in the following quote, in which he shows both eloquence and humility:

“As a musician it’s my responsibility to get better, and if people are admiring the work I do, then that’s even more inspiration to improve and to take it up a notch. The hunger for improvement and exploration and all that really does derive from the acclaim. I know people give me that respect, so I feel I have to earn it.”

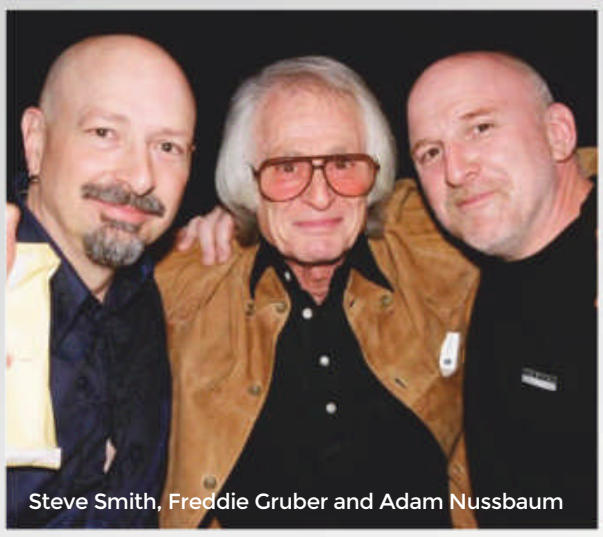
www.dime-online.org

If you would like to know the sources used in this article, please contact the author at: www.mikesturgis.co.uk

Freddie Gruber

Moving tributes to the late Freddie Gruber from Steve Smith, Dave Weckl and Joey Heredia

Steve Smith (Vital Information, Journey)



Steve Smith, Freddie Gruber and Adam Nussbaum

Image: courtesy of Adam Nussbaum

"My phone rang, and my friend Peter Erskine was on the line: 'Do you know Freddie Gruber? He's looking for you'. It was late 1989, and I had not heard of Freddie. Peter told me that one of Freddie's students had showed him some of my 1987 DCI video *Steve Smith Part One* and Freddie said, 'I can help him get out of his own way'.

"Ian Wallace also told me about Freddie, and at the 1990 Zildjian Day in NYC, Ian introduced me to Fred. After the Zildjian Day concluded, Freddie, Ian and I, plus a small entourage, went to my hotel room for my first lesson. I had a pad and a pair of sticks. Freddie said, 'Play a roll'. I played a press roll for about three seconds, and the palm of Fred's right hand came down on the tips of the sticks stopping them on the pad. I was holding the sticks towards the butt ends. He slid the sticks up my hands to a new fulcrum/balance point, and said, 'Now play a roll'. Immediately, I played a smoother roll with better response from the sticks. I decided right there that Fred knew what he was talking about.

"Over the next four to five years, I would visit Fred at his Los Angeles home and have a lesson. Generally, I would pay him $300 for a three-hour lesson, but I would be at his home for at least eight hours! Fred woke up around 5pm, and I'd get to his house shortly after that. We'd walk to the local market, and he would, ever so slowly, construct a garden salad from the salad bar. Then we'd walk back to his house with Fred talking nonstop the entire time. His narrative was his perspective of life, women, health insurance, the universe, anything except drumming. One time he told me his version of the origin of life: 'There was an amoeba that said, "I'm bored, let's split"'.

"Fred's way of teaching was unorthodox and not for everyone. When I finally coaxed him into his drum room, usually around 11pm, we would work on minute details in super-slow motion. Fred's way of teaching was not dogmatic – by the time I studied with him, he had adjusted his approach to teach exactly what the student needed to take one small step forward in their development.

"He spoke using analogies and metaphors ,and not everyone could decode what message he was trying to get across. Some concepts were more obvious than others. For instance, once he got up and started slamming his feet into the floor and talking about dancers: 'Dancers don't try to drive their feet through the floor; they dance on the top of the floor'. His message was that I perceived the "point of impact" an inch or more below the surface of the drumhead. Once my sticks touched the head, they kept going to a point below the surface. The result was the numerous dents and pits in my drumheads; the shockwaves traveling up my hands, wrists and arms; broken sticks; cracked cymbals and the choked sound I was producing.

"This was one of the ways I was "getting in my own way". I was forcing the sticks into the drumhead and not allowing the natural principles of physics and body mechanics to take place and play off the top of the head.

"My studies with Fred were valuable for me in many ways, and each person who studied with him would have different reasons why his teaching was helpful. For me, it was a *transmission of knowledge*, which included his personal brand of wisdom and experience.

"Fred was in his mid-60s when I started studying with him – and I was in my mid-30s. He embodied an esthetic from an earlier era. Fred was from New York and came up in the bebop scene; he even briefly played with Charlie Parker. He battled heroin addiction in his early years and eventually moved to Los Angeles and embarked on a teaching practice, which worked for him. He communicated with a hipster jargon that helped me get more in touch with the essence of swing and the jazz musician mindset. He lived "bebop hours" and would routinely stay

up all night and sleep most of the day. I would see Fred about three or four times a year and each time get 'another piece of the puzzle', as he put it. Eventually, that included right hand, left hand, ride cymbal, bass drum and hi-hat foot techniques with an integrated swing pulse-based concept.

"Fred's gifts were observation – seeing where you were having a problem and step-by-step guidance. He helped you relearn certain mechanics so you could align with natural principles and remove the blockage. Fred would also come to see me play with my band Vital Information when we played in LA and would give me critical feedback, which went on even after the more formal lessons had stopped. I documented much of what I learned from those lessons in the Hudson Music video *Steve Smith Drumset Technique/History of the U.S. Beat*.

"After I had studied with Fred about a year or so, Dave Weckl asked me what I had been doing to improve my playing, and I told him that I had been studying with Freddie. Shortly after that, Dave started studying with him, too. In 1993, when I played on the *Burning for Buddy* albums, Neil Peart asked me the same question. And when I told Neil about Fred, he wanted to meet him. Fred kept an apartment in NYC and was in town during the recording of that album. I was able to immediately introduce Neil to Fred, and they hit it off right away. We know that Neil spent many hours with Fred and worked on whatever "pieces of the puzzle" that he gave to Neil.

"Freddie Gruber's lessons, friendship and input not only helped me become a better drummer, but also helped me become a better musician."

Dave Weckl (Dave Weckl Band, Chick Corea Elektric Band)

"Freddie was a force of nature and an incredible character. And man, did he have stories to tell – he was like a cat with nine lives! When I was in my 20s and 30s, I have to admit that I tended to avoid him – he could be overwhelming! But I ended up taking lessons with him after seeing Steve Smith play at a Zildjian Day in the '90s. Every aspect of Steve's playing had skyrocketed from when I had last seen him, and when I asked him what he'd been doing, he told me to 'Go see Freddie!'

"So, Freddie came to watch me play at Catalina's in Hollywood, but it wasn't a good night for me... I didn't feel comfortable, and it was only in the last tune that I felt I was really able to open up. I started to apologise and voice my discomfort to Freddie afterwards, but he cut me right off and said, 'Not until the last tune, right?' He could see that I'd hit the zone in that final song, and he told me that he could get me there *all* of the time...

"Up until that point, when I was having a 'bad day' I would blame it on something else, but as Freddie taught me, it was actually because I wasn't allowing the sticks to work properly for me. Freddie showed me what Buddy (Rich) had taught him, which was to basically throw the stick down and let it rebound all the way back up – controlling it with the thumb and middle finger. This method used a different leverage point, or fulcrum

grip, to the one most of us were familiar with at that time, and, what I realised later, is that's what Freddie was referencing when he said I was 'in the zone' or 'not in the zone'. When I was playing more from the middle/back of my hand – with my middle finger

and thumb being the fulcrum – I was in it, but when I used the front of my hand – my thumb and index finger – it tended to take the back of my hand off the stick, and I wasn't.

"To this day, I use the same method with every student I have, but it's an incredibly hard exercise to get people who are used to playing with the front of their hand to then pivot from the middle. For me, it was a major lightbulb moment, and when I had got my kit set up in the right position ergonomically, everything was 100% easier – to the point where I was laughing when I was playing singles around the drums! The tape came off my fingers, injuries subsided, and, thanks to Freddie, I now feel in better playing shape at 60, than I did at 40.

"So those were the technical aspects of what Freddie taught me, but the biggest thing he changed was I how I *thought* about playing music... Pre-Freddie, I was more of a cerebral player – I grew up in New York, in the late '70s and '80s, just when drum machines had started to take over. The only way you got work in the studio was if you were precise enough to give a drum machine a run for its money, and if you knew how to tune your drums to sound like a drum machine. Dead, thick heads, a lot of tape, no room sound – welcome to the '80s! So that's where my anal precision approach originated, and when it came to time and feel, I was always singing subdivisions, even when I was grooving.

"Freddie got me into a more relaxed and organic way of playing, where the motion of the strokes allowed a more natural body movement – like walking down the street to a tempo that doesn't change. Of course, I knew about motion, but I didn't understand how to translate it into my drumming until I was able to let go with the hands. I must also credit Jim Chapin here, too. Jim was the first to show me the Moeller technique, but it was Freddie who compartmentalised it for me and helped me to 'feel' how the space helps dictate the time. I think we have a tendency to forget about the tradition of what has gone before, but the guys like Sanford A Moeller, Billy Gladstone and George L Stone were the founding fathers of those three basic drum techniques.

"It's such a shame that more of Freddie's playing isn't documented, but one thing he did share with me was a newspaper article from his time in New York. I think it's pretty apt that he was described as "a drummer ahead of his time".

Joey Heredia (El Trio, Tribal Tech)

Image: James Cumpsty

"I was a disciple of [drum teacher] Murray Spivack, so I never actually studied with Freddie, but we were friends, and I loved him like a father. We had a nice vibe together and would hang out at the weirdest times of the day – getting food late was our favourite thing to do, and we had this little saying: 'Night time is the right time!'

"Because Freddie wasn't my drum teacher, I didn't have anything to prove, but I got such a kick playing for him, and I always tried to light it up as best I could. Freddie always told me that I was born to play drums, and he loved coming to watch me with my trio – with Marco Mendoza on bass and Renato Neto on keyboards. We performed a lot at a little club called La Ve Lee, and every year I would throw a birthday party for him there. *Everybody* – from Neil Peart to Prince – would come, and it got to be quite a vibe. Freddie would be in his element, holding court, joking around and telling stories... Because he was such a character, not many people realised how intelligent he actually was, but the two of us would spend hours analysing the world. Drumming was not something that the two of us tended to talk about, though.

"Freddie got such a kick out of helping the drummers he taught, and, for him,

"...HE WAS A GUY WHO TRULY LOVED MUSIC ON A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL..."

Image: courtesy of Peter Erskine

it was all about the philosophy behind the drums, which is quite different to technique. That musical side of him had so much information as to why people played the way they did, and it was exciting and beautiful to him the way that someone would touch a ride cymbal... Everybody thinks that he was just a teacher, but he was also a guy who truly loved music on a whole other level, and he witnessed so much of it during his lifetime. Jazz was his thing, and when you were in his company, it was almost like you were reliving it with him. It was one of the many cool things about hanging with him.

"I guess the way I approach things with my students now has come from Freddie. As it was with him, there's no time limit when you come for a lesson with me. I tell everyone to bring snacks and be prepared to hang!"

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‘Spirit Of Radio’
Rush

PLAY-ALONG TRACK

Classic Track

This classic Rush track is also a technical and creative masterpiece

Drummer: Neil Peart

‘Spirit Of Radio’ is one of Rush’s most commercially successful tracks, a fact that’s somewhat surprising given its rhythmically challenging intro where Neil Peart and bassist Geddy Lee play a series of syncopated figures over Alex Lifeson’s hammer-on guitar riff. This part is actually so syncopated that to notate it in terms of specific note values is unlikely to convey its actual feel, with Neil and Geddy undoubtedly developing the phrasing together to move perfectly in sync over the 16th-note guitar part.

Once we reach the main guitar riff, Neil settles into a familiar rock paradiddle pattern that appears on many Rush tracks, comprising the first half of a paradiddle (R-L-R-R) and the second half of an inverted paradiddle (L-R-R-L). This is played with the right hand on the bell of the ride where it creates a double stroke before and after each backbeat. The verse then moves to a simpler version involving eighth notes on the hi-hats, though this time with the bass drum carrying more of the 16th-note movement.

Heading further into the track, the second and third verses feature a simple quarter-note bass drum pattern; however, at this point, Neil is also playing the xylophone part before deftly switching back to sticks for the crashes and 16th notes played on the hi-hats.

Next, there’s a brief excursion into 7/4 and a return to some of the syncopated intro phrasing before reaching the pseudo-reggae feel of the final verse. This was a style the band had begun experimenting with around this time. From here, a half-time feel creates the backdrop for the 12-bar guitar solo before the eighth-note piano joins for the final six bars leading into the closing cymbal chokes.

And there, in the space of one piece, Neil inimitably displays some of the qualities that made him so unique: the effortless negotiation of the different feels and time signatures, his virtuosity and, in short, creating and performing a part that is as challenging as it is musical.

He was undoubtedly one of a kind, and his pairing with his Rush bandmates gave him the perfect outlet for his creativity, including lyrics and artwork as well as the drumming. And he leaves us with an incredible catalogue of work for us and future generations of drummers to learn from and be inspired by.

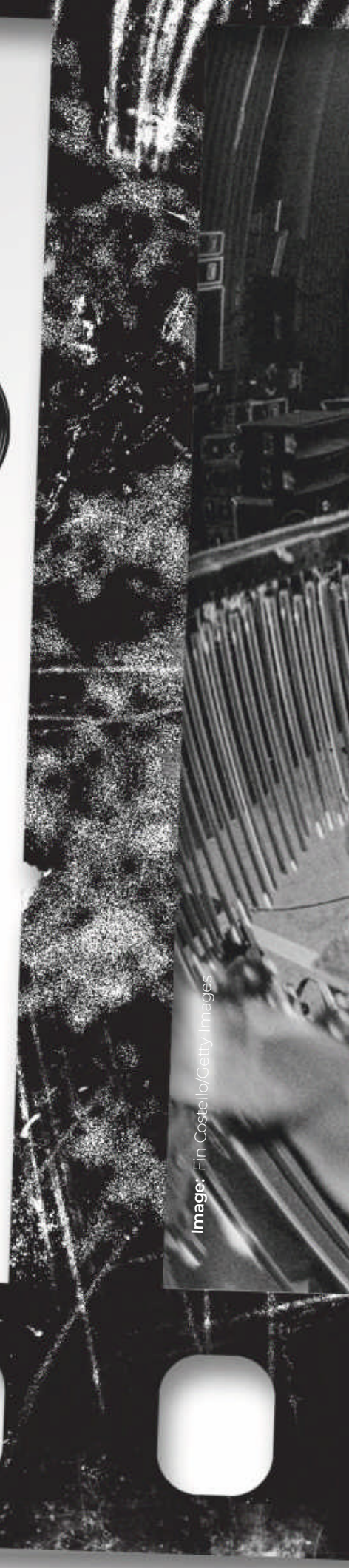


Image: Fin Costello/Getty Images

Watch Pete’s Play-Along now at
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

1 This classic intro features unison figures between the bass and drums which are orchestrated around the kit.

2 The middle of the piece switches to 7/4 for eight bars.

3

The final verse features a reggae inspired feel with the backbeat played using a cross-stick sound.

"HE WAS **UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF A KIND,** AND HIS PAIRING WITH HIS RUSH BANDMATES GAVE HIM **THE PERFECT OUTLET FOR HIS CREATIVITY...**"

‘Tom Sawyer’

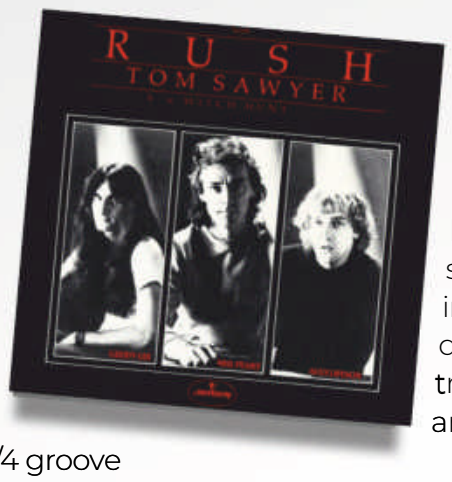
Rush

PLAY-ALONG TRACK

Classic Track

An iconic performance that exemplifies Neil’s playing and creativity

Drummer: Neil Peart



When it comes to a classic progressive rock drum track, ‘Tom Sawyer’ ticks all the boxes: demanding syncopated grooves, odd time signatures and round-the-kit solo fills. But as any Neil Peart fan will attest, it is not done gratuitously, but with a deliberate and methodical objective: to complement the track.

The piece kicks off with the main 4/4 groove probably best felt in cut time and with the backbeat falling on beat 3. However, once Neil has established the main groove, things rapidly become more demanding. As the power chords are introduced, they’re cleverly punctuated between the kick, snare and hats, with the short hi-hat barks being particularly challenging to execute either side of the backbeat.

We then hit the syncopated one-bar figure, which occurs at several points throughout the piece, with the bar in question gradually becoming more elaborately orchestrated during its four appearances before finally ending up with 16th notes played between the crashes.

After the first chorus we hit the odd time section. There are many challenging and interesting elements to this, such as how Neil implies a double time feel towards the end of the section, punctuating certain notes on the china cymbal.

The four-bar drum break is next before the final verse. Here, Neil plays some orchestrated solo ideas, which include single-stroke 16th-note flurries down the toms and hand/foot linear triplet figures between the floor toms and bass drums.

As the piece returns to the 7/4 feel for the fade out, it’s possible to conclude that ‘Tom Sawyer’ exemplifies Neil’s remarkable contribution to drumming. His creativity shines through every part, from the open hi-hat barks to the solo orchestrations around the kit and, of course, the odd time signatures.

At times the playing is restrained and subtle, while at others it’s a tour-de-force. But all of it is clearly honed, deliberate and perfected, with the thought and effort in creating the optimal drum part.

In short, it’s clear why Neil is regarded not only as a drummer’s drummer, but also as one who made one of the biggest contributions to rock drumming we’ll ever see.

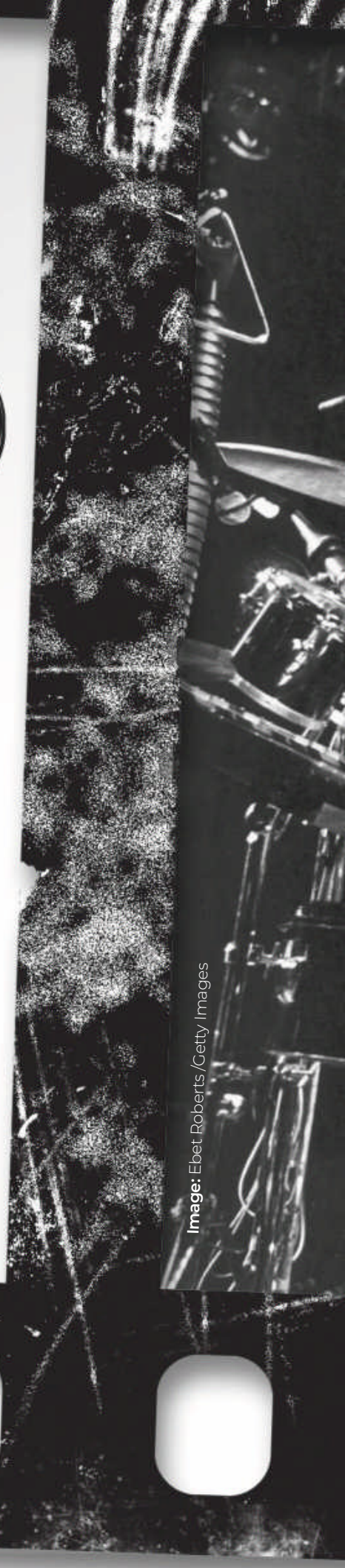


Image: Ebet Roberts/Getty Images

Watch Pete’s Play-Along now at
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

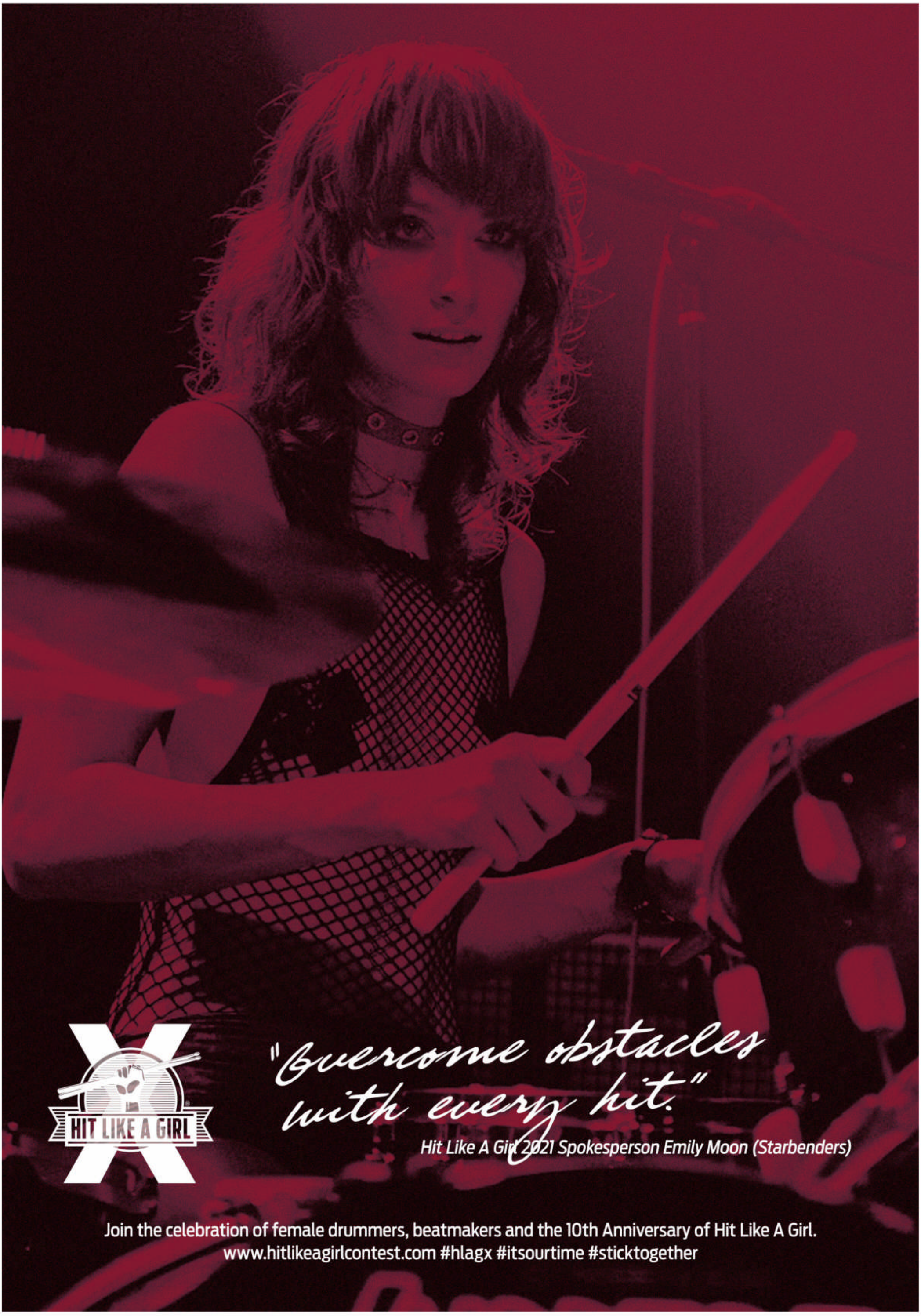
1 The intro groove features an array of short open hi hat ‘barks’ within the basic pattern.

2 In the middle of the piece, Neil plays a classic 8-bar solo, featuring a selection of carefully orchestrated ideas played around hits played by the band.

3

The outro returns to, and fades out on, the same 5 bar cycle that appears behind the early guitar solo.

"AT TIMES THE PLAYING IS RESTRAINED AND SUBTLE, WHILE AT OTHERS IT'S A TOUR-DE-FORCE. BUT ALL OF IT IS CLEARLY HONED, DELIBERATE AND PERFECTED..."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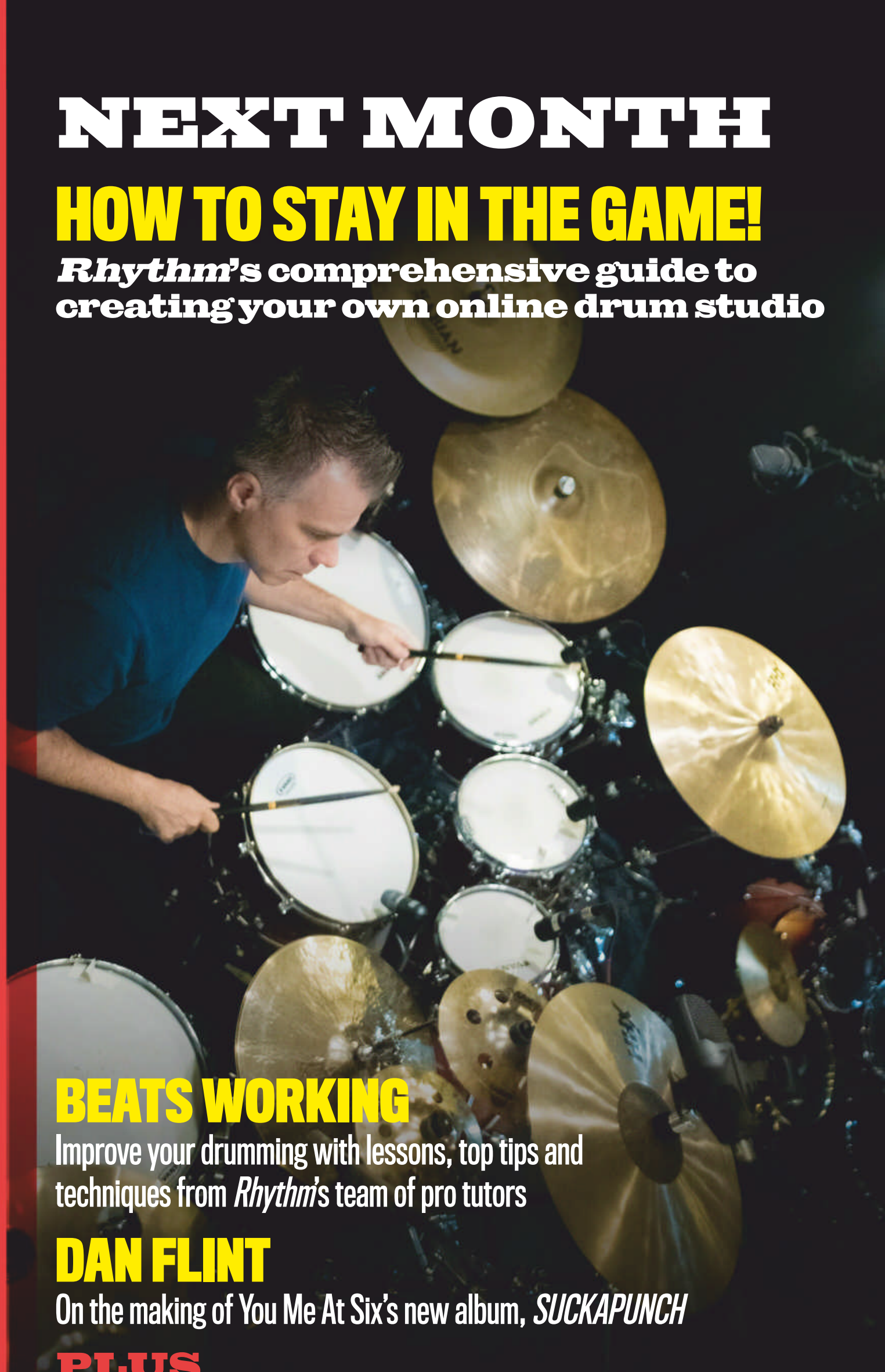
***Rhythm*'s comprehensive guide to creating your own online drum studio**



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Six of the Best

IAN THOMAS

From massive pop hits to Madison Square Garden and all-day big band sessions, Ian Thomas takes it all in his stride and keeps the groove swinging

George Michael

Track: 'Kissing A Fool'
Album: *Faith*, 1987

"This was the first session for a major artist that I'd ever done. We rehearsed the arrangement in the studio with George. He insisted on singing live on every take to give us the vibe, and he was perfect on every single take. I always remember that. He knew exactly what he wanted, and he was funny. We had a good laugh that day. There's a big tom fill in it, which I was very proud of at the time."

Jim Mullen

Track: 'Speed Bumps'
Album: *Jimjam*, 2000

"When I lived in North London, I had this small garage that I converted into a studio. We recorded it there, and I engineered it all onto reel-to-reel tape. It's one of the best experiences I've had recording to this day. It started as a jam with Jim Mullen, Pino Palladino and Hamish Stuart. Totally live, no clicks, just playing together in the studio, really close together because there was no room, which gave us a certain energy that's really nice."

Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood

Track: 'Can't Find My Way Home'
Album: *Live From Madison Square Garden*, 2009

"That was the Blind Faith reunion gig at Madison Square Garden. I had to do some proper woodshedding on that, as I didn't know quite a lot of the tunes, and so had to study Ginger Baker's playing. He was an amazing musician, and some of the feels he played were difficult to replicate because he had such an individual style. I wasn't really asked to replicate it, I was expected to play like myself, but with a tip to the originals."

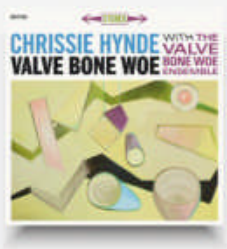
Mark Knopfler

Track 'Nobody Does That'
Album: *Down The Road Wherever*, 2018

"I've been with Mark now since 2011. It's so great to work with him. We won't get anything in advance. We just turn up, he plays us the song, and then we go in and kick it around. It's a really musical situation. What I love most about working with Mark is that I can suggest things and say, 'Can I just try something on this track?' It's nice to feel like you have the freedom to try stuff out."

Chrissie Hynde With The Valve Bone Woe Ensemble

Track: 'Meditation On A Pair Of Wire Cutters'
Album: *Valve Bone Woe*, 2019



"This is an album I did with Chrissie Hynde with producer Marius de Vries who has produced Björk. He was great to work with – he wanted it to have an old school jazz sensibility because they're standard tunes, but he mixed in a lot of hip sounds and did some great production on it. On this track, an old Charlie Mingus tune, I was allowed to play whatever I liked."

The Gareth Lockrane Big Band

Track: 'Aby7innia'
Album: *Fistfight At The Barn Dance*, 2017

"This was done completely live, 11 big band tracks in one day, from 10 in the morning until 10 at night. It was one of the most knackering days ever, because Gareth's music is really full on. There are a lot of notes going on, so there was some serious reading on that gig. That's the reason I'd like to include it. It's come out quite musical, even though it was very demanding from a reading point of view."

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